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A Pittsburgh Horror Story

TAKE ONE

Putting Janis Together
The Inside Story

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TAKE ONE

A Pittsburgh Horror Story
by Paul McCollough
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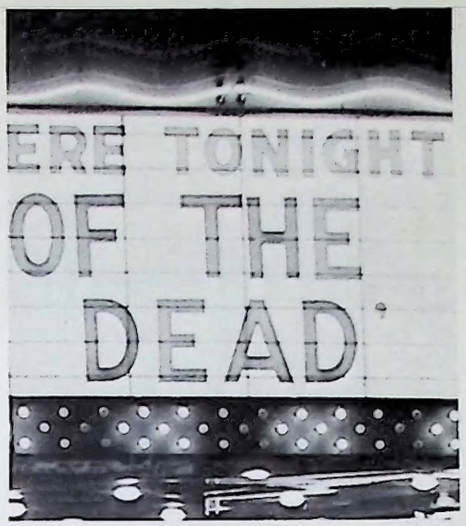

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FEEDBACK

We welcome communications from our readers, but can seldom accommodate letters over 500 words long. The editors assume that any letter received (unless otherwise stated) is free for publication.

Third Man explained

Here is an answer to Martin Fass [Feedback, Vol. 4 No. 5], quoted from the book of **The Third Man** script:

"... The opening of the film had to be shot three months after the main shooting was officially completed, because the producer found that the location and situation in Vienna was insufficiently explained for a mass audience. Carol Reed himself narrated the opening." (by Andrew Sinclair)

The original Greene script started with the passport shot.

Well, do I win the prize?

Keep up the good work! Great magazine yer putting out!

James Choad
Fort San, Saskatchewan

Irresponsibility and nonsense

OK, I wrote you once before. At that point you'd just done a good story on Don Siegel [Vol. 3 No. 4] & I wrote you to congratulate you on the piece & on the overall honesty & lack of pretension you displayed.

That was then. But it seems you've been taking somebody's advice about how-to-run-it-to-be-a-big-success, and you've chosen the lowest common denominator route. First 40¢, which I didn't mind, then glossy covers with slick graphics, which spoke of packaging & market research. Now 50¢ in the wake of worthless articles about Bradbury, and *a completely worthless, valueless magazine.* Oh, you'll sell alright. Jane Fonda answers Jean-Luc Godard indeed: a total lie! The porn film bit (except for tastefully interspersed "fucks" & "cunts") could have appeared in *Time*. Your reviewers are needlessly self-conscious ("Will this line be clipped for a tagline?") and Joe Kane's lead story [Vol. 4 No. 4] was just mindless puffery. Clearly, you have systematically & absolutely relinquished any claim you may once have had towards serious film study. Levity is one thing. Irresponsibility is another. The Rossellini article was the sole beacon in the whole mangy mess. Your readers who took you to task for printing the premature ejaculations of Richard Meltzer were quite correct: perhaps you suppose that you have absolved yourself by printing their complaints? Nonsense.

Continued commercial success to an utterly meaningless enterprise!

Wheeler Dixon
New York, New York

Acts 9:5

Please remove us from your mailing list immediately. Such filth and porno should never be printed, let alone sent to a Christian college.

K. Singer
The King's College
Briarcliff Manor, N.Y.

(Ed. Note: "The King's College... Smoking, drinking, dancing, theater attendance and movies, gambling, drugs, foul language, and oath-bound secret societies are not allowed." — from *Barron's Profiles of American Colleges.*)

Letter re Jane

I've been meaning to write a few words of encouragement concerning your magazine. It's a fine example of progressive criticism and film information. I really look forward to reading it each issue.

Having just finished directing a hour-long documentary on youth, gangs, detention institutions, etc. in Detroit, called **No Such Thing as a Juvenile Delinquent**, I was catching up on my *Take One* reading when I came across Gerald Peary's article concerning **Letter to Jane** [Vol. 4 No. 4]. It was excellent. Peary presented in print what Godard and Gorin failed to do in their film, which was to consider political questions that Jane should look at related to her "image", while at the same time supporting her as a woman and film person.

While raising money for the Winter Soldier Investigation films with Jane, I was always encouraged by her consistent struggle to "feel", where others merely positioned themselves in relation to an issue. As Godard and Gorin should know, adopting a political line is quite easy, developing a political analysis takes time.

As American media showed us what Viet Nam wasn't, so have they portrayed Jane. Once you accept the fact that Jane is a star, then she doesn't have to be a star anymore. Move beyond the image and I'm convinced that you will understand the woman.

Bill Pace
Detroit 48201

EARN $5000

Yes, you can collect a fat $5000 reward simply by tipping off the Mitchell Brothers to any bootleg prints of their films **Being the Green Door, Resurrection of Eve**, or **Sodom and Gomorrah**. Call them collect at 415-441-1930.

FESTIVALS AND COMPETITIONS

The **Geneva College Film Competition** will take place April 23 through 25. Student-made films (16mm, 8mm or super-8) should reach C. Benjamin Hale Jr., Geneva College Film Competition, Beaver Falls, Pa. 15010, by April 10, and be accompanied by a $3 entry fee.

The only event of its kind anywhere in the world, the 23rd International **Competition for Mountain and Exploration Films** is to be held April 27 through May 3. Films (in 16mm or 35mm) should be submitted (along with the 10,000-lire entry fee) by March 20. Further information from the festival at: via Verdi, 30, 38100 Trento, Italy.

March 17 through 23 are the dates set for the Fifth Annual **USA Film Festival**. Contact Nancy Willen, USA Film Festival, Division of Broadcast-Film Art, Meadows School of the Arts, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas 75275 (214-692-2979).

The official dates of the 15th **Cartagena** (Colombia) **Film Festival** have been announced: March 7 through 13. The only international film festival held in South America, Cartagena offers nine categories for foreign films, a special showing of Latin American features, plus the 11th National Commercial Film Festival for Television and Films, and Documentary Features. North American contact: Victor Nieto Jr., Vortex Enterprises, 1228 N. La Cienega Blvd., West Hollywood, Calif. 90069 (213-657-7584).

November 10 is the deadline for entries to the **Amateur-8 Movie Contest**. There is no entry fee, but films should run no longer than 20 minutes. Write: Philip J. Preston, Amateur-8, 2971 Longmeadow Drive, Trenton, Michigan 48183.

The Fifth International **Tampere Film Festival** will be held February 20 through 23. Enquire: Tampere Film Festival, P.O. Box 305, SF-33101, Tampere 10, Finland.

This Christmas, let D.W. Griffith announce your gifts.

Right! Gift your friends with a 12-issue subscription to Take One this Christmas (for the low, low price of only $5 apiece), and they'll receive — as their introduction to North America's most popular film magazine — our special year-end D.W. Griffith Centennial Issue, highlighting the life and work of America's first major film director.

The issue is entirely based on a series of ground-breaking interviews with the people who knew Griffith best — including his widow, Frank Capra, Hal Roach, Lillian Gish, Blanche Sweet, and many others. Plus, there'll be never-before-published photographs taken right out of the Griffith family album.

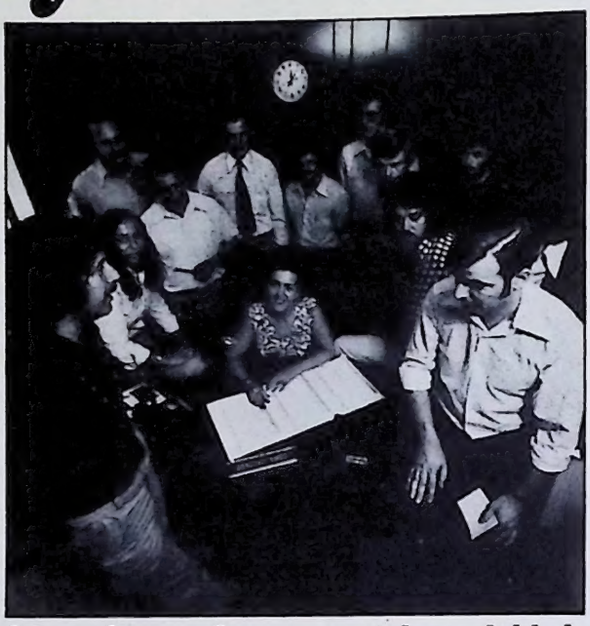
And that's just the *first* of the 12 issues of Take One your lucky friends can look forward to receiving. In the months ahead there'll be even more of the searching interviews, perceptive articles, broad-ranging columns, thought-provoking reviews, and juicy news that you love us for. All for the bargain price of $5 per 12-issue subscription — a saving of 17% over the newsstand cost.

So, get your gift order in today — while you're thinking about it and before that last-minute rush. We'll take it from there, gift card and all.

Take One, Box 1778, Station B, Montreal, Quebec, Canada H3B 3L3

TAKE ONE

Think of her as your Mom.



She can get you a quick sound-transfer. Or a good mixer. Or a 51-track theatre. Or just a sound booth.

Dorothy Emes is the booking lady here at Film House. And anything that has to do with film making, she can fix it for you.

Because, as you may have heard, Film House has been re-built from the ground up. With the handiest facilities in North America. (One small example: after you see your inter-lock, we now can transfer it right to Sony cassette. So you can take it away with you.)

And helping Dorothy today are some of the best people in film. People like Clarke DaPrato, Paul Coombe, Bill Hambley, and Colin Davis. People you can count on every time out.

In the Lab, Paul Norris is on the order desk. And Bill Hambley is managing the newest, most dependable hardware in the country. Like the new Kodak ECN II that develops the new finer-grain Kodak 5247/7247. (With people like Chief Timer, David Herrington, to make sure every foot of your film is right.)

And there's lots more. Because we're working to make the new Film House the finest one-stop Film-making facility in North America. And we're here to stay.

Come and see us soon. Or call Dorothy Emes at 363-4321. Just ask for Mom.

Some of her helpers:

Len Baker, Night Supervisor • Paul Coombe, Mixer • Clarke DaPrato, Mixer • Colin Davis, Technical Director • Stan Ford, Rentals Manager • Bill Hambley, Laboratory Manager • David Herrington, Chief Timer • Ian Jacobson, Mixer • Wilson Markle, Sales • Ron Morby, Production Supervisor • Paul Norris, Order Desk • Leo O'Donnell, Technical Director • Michael Ryan, Post Production Co-ordinator • Andy Shepherd, Timer • Cyril Steckham, Machine and Transfer • Ken Unwin, Engineering • Tony Van Den Akker, Mixer. (And Al Streeter is on hand with a comprehensive library of over 10,000 sound effects.)

And what they can do for you:

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FILM HOUSE

Our house is your house.

The News Page

The truth 24 times per second.

Have you noticed that Graham Greene plays a small (uncredited) role in Truffaut's **Day for Night** as one of the two British insurancemen called to the studio after the death of the Jean-Pierre Aumont character?

Claude Lelouch's latest epic, **Toute Une Vie**, has no less than nine different endings. Viewers in Canada, Italy, Japan and Switzerland, for instance, will all see slightly different films.

That beautiful polar bear killed by the Eskimos in **White Dawn** wasn't — killed, that is. He was a specially trained bear flown in from Washington state. In fact he had never been in the Arctic before.

The Canadian contingent at this year's Sorrento (Italy) Film Festival is still talking about their **ten days of glory** over there. A total of eleven features were screened to enthusiastic audiences, every major newspaper in the country ran huge spreads daily, and the closing awards ceremony was nationally televised. As the Canadians made their nightly way from their hotel to the theatre, hundreds of Italians lined their route cheering and asking for autographs. Now if only the films could get shown in Canada...

Cinematographer Roy Wagner claims to have developed a new camera lens guaranteed to make anyone look at least 15 lbs. **thinner** on film.

Strange movie titles we've spotted lately: *Boxoffice* ("The Pulse of the Motion Picture Industry") refers to the Dyan Cannon starrer **Child Under Relief**, while a recent issue of *GQ* gave a rave review to a new Louis Malle film called **Lancome Lucien** (about a little kid in occupied France who invents a new perfume?).

In order to conceal the fact that he's bowlegged, **Richard Burton** has his trousers pressed with special, curved creases.

Shelley Winters was once a Junior Red Cross **swimming instructor** in one of the ghetto areas of New York City. *Her* swimming instructor was Johnny Weismuller.

Marvin Hamlisch, the Academy Award winner for his music in **The Sting** and **The Way We Were**, grabbed a cab in Philadelphia recently and asked to be taken to The Mike Douglas Show. The unidentified cabbie asked disinterestedly if he were appearing on the program. "Yes," replied Hamlisch with his usual modesty. "Did you see the Academy Awards?" "Oh, yeah," said the cabbie, brightening noticeably. "You're the streaker?"

Actor Robert Conrad has acquired the motion picture rights to the life story of **Jimmy Hoffa**.

George C. Scott has announced that his film, **The Savage is Loose**, which he is distributing directly to theatres himself, is the first theatrical feature in history to return the investment of its backers before going into release (outright sale of the film to exhibitors in the U.S. and abroad has already brought in $4.5 million). Now, stung by the MPAA's decision to award the film an R rating, he is encouraging theatre-owners to show the film without a rating, and offering to refund the price of admission to any parent who thinks the rating is justified.

Robert Towne's original script for **Chinatown** had the Faye Dunaway character successfully making her escape to Mexico — that bullet-through-the-flawed-eye is pure Polanski.

One of the two screenwriters of the recently-released **Life and Times of Xaviera Hollander** is named David Loin.

In preparation for the film's multiple worldwide Christmas premiere, United Artists has had some 1600 prints of their new Bonder **The Man with the Golden Gun** produced — an all time record.

Out of the country? Tv set broken down? Don't panic, there is actually a publication which summarizes the daily traumas of the popular **soap operas**. It's called *Daytime Serial Newsletter* (Box 6, Mountain View, Calif. 94042) and an annual subscription is $8 (tell'em we sent you).

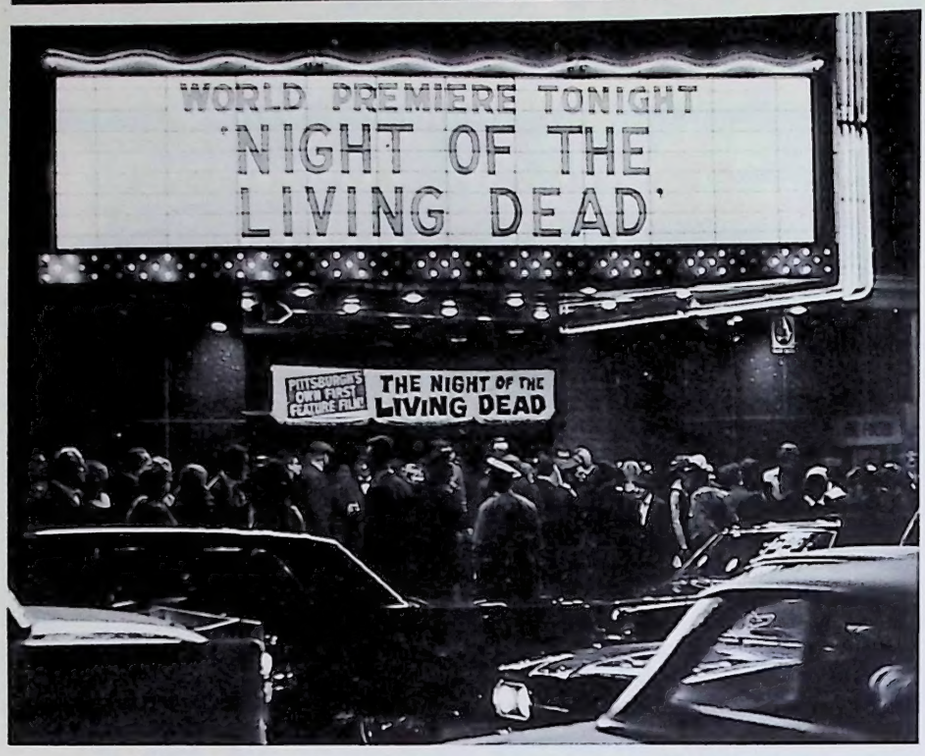
Miami **pensioner** Paul Morgan has spent most of the last 25 of his 91 years at the movies. Morgan lives close-by the Rio Theatre, whose manager says, "He's always been the first in line every day since I came here nine years ago." Morgan, interviewed recently as he stood by the candy-counter waiting for the show to start, reflected, "It's my life in here. Tomorrow, maybe I'm dead. I don't know what God is going to do."

Production costs on Godard's early features: **A Bout de Souffle (Breathless)**, 1959, $160,000; **Le Petit Soldat**, 1960, $180,000; **Une Femme est une Femme (A Woman is a Woman)**, 1961, $160,000; **Vivre sa Vie (Live for Life)**, 1962, $64,000; **Les Carabiniers**, 1963, $140,000; **Le Mépris (Contempt)**, 1963, $900,000; **Bande à Part (Band of Outsiders)**, 1964, $120,000; **Une Femme Mariée (A Married Woman)**, 1964, $120,000; **Alphaville**, 1965, $220,000; **Pierrot le Fou**, 1965, $300,000; **Made in USA**, 1966, $50,000; **Weekend**, 1967, $250,000.

Production Notes from All Over:

Ben Gazzara has the title role in Roger Corman's upcoming **Capone**. ... Don Siegel has been signed by Paramount to produce and direct **The Night I Caught the Santa Fe Chief**, based on a novel by Edward Thorpe. ... The next composer to get the Ken Russell treatment is Franz Liszt; with Roger Daltry of The Who playing the title role. ... Rodolfo Echeverria Alvarez, head of the Banco Nacional Cinematografica de Mexico, has been conferring, lately, with Jean-Luc Godard about the latter's making a film in Mexico in 1975. ... Woody Allen has finally talked about **Love and Death**, the film which he starts shooting in Hungary soon. Allen tries to assassinate Napoleon. It's a comedy. ... The National Film Board of Canada has been commissioned to make the official film of the 1976 Montreal Olympic Games. ... Bud Yorkin, whose last film was **The Thief Who Came to Dinner** but has lately been making more of a name for himself as a partner in Tandem Productions (creators of *All in the Family*, *Sanford and Son*, and *Maude*), is returning to theatrical pictures. He will produce and direct **The Making of Little Hippo** (about a 19-year-old girl who becomes a pop star), then direct **Lethal Gas** (see our Book News). ...Two films on Houdini are currently in preparation: Paramount has a film called, simply, **Houdini** (based on the book by Harold Kellock) ready to roll early 1975; and Columbia recently announced **The Magic Man**, to be directed by James Bridges, based in part on material written by Anthony Burgess. ... Abby (**Judgment at Nuremberg**) Mann is completing the script for a feature film presently titled **Wounded Knee**, to be produced by John Foreman for Columbia Pictures, with shooting tentatively scheduled to begin in March. Marlon Brando will play the part of a defense lawyer. ... Louis Malle has started work on his next feature, **Black Moon**, about the adventures of a young girl against the background of a civil war. ... Richard Burton, Charlotte Rampling and Robert Mitchum have teamed to make **Jackpot** (being directed by Terence Young), about a declining movie star (Burton) who becomes the subject of an insurance investigation. ... Jerry Lewis seems finally to have given up trying to edit together a film he shot two years ago, in which he plays a tragic clown in a concentration camp. ... And François Truffaut writes to say that he is presently occupied preparing two films: The first, to be shot in January, called **Adele H** (a nineteenth century love story), and a second — "with children" — to be filmed in July. Truffaut has also recently been quoted as admitting that **Day for Night** was partly modelled on Howard Hawks' **Hatari!**, which he thinks was actually a disguised story about filmmaking.

A PITTSBURGH HORROR STORY



For a while it seemed as though everything was going to work out.

When I joined the Pittsburgh-based Latent Image production company in October 1968, the folks there had just opened their smash horror hit, **The Night of the Living Dead.** Things were starting to click for the Image and for **Living Dead**'s young director, George Romero.

By January 1969, we had started work on another feature, called **At Play with the Angels,** and I began to feel the dizzying effects of impending success. Good God, **Living Dead** was pulling in crowds all over the United States — no, all over the world. We were going to break everybody's ass, because we could produce films with as much technical skill as Hollywood with half as much money. How the hell was anybody going to beat that?

Of course, for me much of this backslapping was simply wishful thinking. I was dripping wet, just out of school with a cynically-accepted degree in journalism from Penn State University. I had joined Latent Image first as a gopher, became a grip, then key grip, and had had nothing to do with the actual production of **Living Dead.**

By Paul McCollough

*Paul McCollough has just completed yet another screenplay, **The Gladhouse Follies,** about strange goings-on in an old-folks home. He still lives in Pittsburgh.*

But being on the scene with Romero in the hour of his triumph, I, too, felt the pure rush of beating the Majors at their own game. I began to form my own plans to write screenplays by the dozen so that my work could be produced in Pittsburgh as well.

However, here we are, six years since **Living Dead** opened to an astonished Steel City, and the dream is over, as the English might say. And now it seems that **Living Dead** is more of an allegory for its makers than for its audience — even though, within less than a year, **Living Dead** became *the most profitable* horror film ever to be produced outside the walls of a Major studio.

Let me explain.

First, for those of you who have never caught **Night of the Living Dead** on the bottom of a double or triple bill, and who have never read Rex Reed's columns on the film, a brief synopsis of the cheery little story is definitely in order:

Barb, the girl, and her brother Johnny, pull their car into an appropriately dank cemetery for the expressed purpose of putting a wreath on Father's grave. This they do at the insistence of their Mother who has remained back home in Pittsburgh, presumably to say the Rosary and listen to the ballgame.

Johnny, to say the least, is annoyed from his shoes to his glasses, and says succinctly, "You think I want to blow Sunday on a scene like this?"

Barb, ignoring the hipster jargon, gets out of the car and respectfully places the wreath on Father's grave, praying while Johnny paces about the tombstones. Johnny repeats his deep-seated desire to be on their way with the lines, "Come on, Barb, praying's for church" and Barb, with a frown, acquiesces.

As the pair walk back to their car, Barb is dawdling behind when, boo! she's attacked from behind by a tall, mangy-looking Creep who starts ripping at her clothes and strangling her. Johnny spins on his heels and runs to the rescue. Leaping on the Creep with the animal-like innocence of an author's pawn, Johnny pushes Barb to safety and begins to grapple with the creature.

But then a terrible event happens, and this is where the film starts to generate its gut reactions: Johnny gets his head bashed in. Can you believe that? Johnny, the pretty-boy brother, gets his damn head bashed in five minutes into the film.

Barb screams and runs to the car, enigmatically losing her shoes. She slams the door shut, but shit! the Creep lunges after her. She reaches for the keys. Oh, no! Johnny has the damn keys. She releases the emergency brake, and the car drifts down the road. The Creep stops slamming rocks into the camera lens and gets dragged behind the car, finally plopping into the dirt.

Barb, go, you're on your way!

Crash! You stupid dummy, how the hell could you run your car into the tree when you got the whole damn road to yourself? Get out, get out of the car, Barb!

Barb runs down the road in her stocking feet, and she spots an *old farm house* through a meadow. She sprints to the house, but the Creep keeps coming. She pauses to catch her breath on the porch, and then, after nearly being chiaroscuroed to death by the cinematographer, dashes inside.

The door slams shut, and Barb locks herself in.

Catch your breath, find a weapon!

Barb rummages through the kitchen drawer and pulls out a butcher knife, bolts into the next room. A spooky musical stinger slams hard on the sound track and Barb's eyes pop out, there's no other way to describe it. And there's nothing but animal heads, severed stuffed heads, poking out from the wall, and all mysteriously bottomlit.

Barb glances about the shadows, looking for Tony Perkins, then speeds away again toward the upstairs stairway. Slowly, she pads up the stairs, and, oh, good God, a dead woman is spread out on the top of the stairs, and, yuk, her goddamn head has been eaten away.

Barb loses her grip, tumbles to the bottom of the steps, and becomes catatonic for the rest of the film, which is actually a welcome comedy relief for a sweating, gagging audience.

Enter the hero. He bangs through the front door, and son-of-a-bitch, if he ain't black.

He also slams the door, finds the girl sobbing to herself, and tries to comfort her in his manly, but primitive fashion. Barb can only cry out, soulfully, "What's happening? What's happening?", whereupon, she again sinks into another bout of catatonia.

Well, to make a long story short, Ben The Black, discovers that this whole damn house is full of crazy normal people who, in their own unique ways, are attempting to escape from a "virtual army" of Creepys, ghouls who, although dead, have been prompted back to life again by an errant space probe that has brought back some strange new virus from Venus. And the ghouls are ever steadfast in their pursuit of human flesh, clawing and grabbing at the living at least once every five minutes.

For the next hour of screentime, Ben has to figure out how to rally together the people in the house in order to escape the hungry folk outside. In the course of the denouement, Ben has to: shoot and kill Harry Cooper, the man they find in the cellar; watch helplessly as a young couple, Bill and Judy, are eaten by the ghouls after they make an unsuccessful escape attempt and are burned alive in an exploding pickup truck; see Barb frightened out of her catatonia by her brother Johnny, who returns to life at the end of the picture to eat his own sister; and get grabbed by Harry Cooper's little daughter, who has become a child-ghoul and has recently killed her mother with a garden trowel and eaten her still quivering heart.

Eventually, Ben takes refuge in the cellar while upstairs, the ghouls, hundreds of them, stomp around and turn over the piano.

AND THEN: Ben is mistaken for one of the damned ghouls himself and is shot in the head.

A simple, horrifying premise taken to its logical extreme made **The Night of the Living Dead** a box office powerhouse, having generated a $2-million gross since its initial release in 1968. Artistic merit aside, that's quite a dollar punch.

What happened next is the sad part of the story.

Night of the Living Dead,
a box office power-house;
At Play with the Angels,
a bastard child;
The Mad People,
a size 40 medium.

Since the gross receipts quickly began to approach the phenomenal, based on what Latent Image had invested in **Living Dead,** Romero and his producers figured that they should hustle up another picture. But this time, for reasons known only to a select few, Romero decided to try another genre rather than attempting to repeat the success that the horror film had brought him.

What came to be born was a youthpic called at first, **At Play with the Angels,** loosely based on a short film that Romero had done with an actor friend back in his university days. The initial idea seemed fine, because at that time **The Graduate** and **Goodbye, Columbus** were proving the viability of this type of film for the adolescent/young adult crowd. The world had yet to see **Easy Rider** or **Midnight Cowboy,** the blockbusters of that approach.

After scripting a photoplay with a Pittsburgh writer chum of his, Romero started shooting **Angels,** all this roughly about the time that I began to be involved with the Image.

An unbelievably uncoordinated production schedule, coupled with a talkative, amorphous script soon sealed the doom of **Angels.** For the next two years and some odd months, between shooting commercials, between long periods of limited cash for the project, Romero ground away at the picture, while **Living Dead** continued to play.

The script went through five or six radical changes. Where **Living Dead** had been the execution of a simple premise, **Angels** became a verb in search of its subject. No one, from the writer to the director to the producer, knew what they wanted to be said.

The plot, stretched skin-tight over 110 minutes of one closeup after another, was that HipBoy Drifter meets SodaJerky Girl Model and they fall into a sexual relationship and move in together and find out that they don't like each other much since he wants to write and then she gets pregnant so the HipBoy Drifter runs away after leaving the SodaJerky Girl and her New Husband a box full of balloons.

It became quickly evident to all that **Angels** was a bastard child.

The title was changed to **There's Always Vanilla,** a reference to one character's analysis of reality that stated: "Even though you might want some exotic flavor of ice cream, vanilla can always be depended upon to be available." Despite this advice from his subconscious, Romero ignored the dependable blend of the horror film flavor, and continued most doggedly to mix up a batch of pineapple/chocolate/fudge brownie/sherbet ripple youthpic.

Eventually, **There's Always Vanilla** became finished, almost seemingly of its own volition. Then the picture was

bicycled around to all of the distribs and turned down by all of them in sequence. By that time, you guessed it, it was 1970-71 and the youthpix market was fading fast. What the men with the $200 suits and big cigars told Romero was to be sure and come back if he ever decided to shoot a sequel to **Living Dead.**

But, as somebody once said, everybody gets what they deserve. A semi-porn soft-core distributor from New York, who at that point had a string of sexploitation import hits from Europe, decided that **Vanilla** was just what he needed to give his operation a little class.

After a brief consultation, Romero and his producers went with Mister Out-of-the-Garment-District-into-the-Film-Business's offer. That was mid-winter, 1970-71, approximately two years from **Vanilla**'s first shooting day.

Now here's where a simple grip with aspirations to the heights, namely me, changed the fabric of Pittsburgh filmmaking.

In late fall of 1970, I had written a screenplay for laughs called **The Mad People,** a reasonable science-fiction account of what transpires when a government truckload of madness-producing chemicals overturns and contaminates a small town's water supply. My version pursued the adventures of a group of five people who are attempting to escape the area of the accident and keep from being locked up by the Army, who, of course, want to hide all traces of the affair. The clincher is that, yes indeed, the group has become stricken with the virus and all are slowly going mad from the effects of the chemicals as they run.

After proudly presenting my just-completed script at the feet of Oz, I waited patiently for word to come down to me concerning **The Mad People.** Time passed, and nothing happened. Since I still cherished my job as chief grip, I lapsed into a respectful, albeit tormented, silence.

Came the Spring of 1971. Even though **Vanilla** had been snapped up by Mister Garment, he was reluctant to release any front money until certain changes were made in the film to make it more commercial. Needless to say, after pouring two years of time and collateral into a picture that still needed more work, cash was scarce. Romero and his Merry Men sat around, wondering which window would offer the least resistance to a flying body.

Then, somebody, and I never found out who, got the idea to send **The Mad People** to Mister Garment. After all, it was a good, well-written script... very contemporary, somewhat similar in style to **Living Dead,** and, most of all, the only property that Image more or less owned at the time.

Shortly thereafter, news arrived from New York that Mister Garment loved the script, *and* that he was putting up some cash for us to do the film, *and* that he was immediately going to jot down some ideas for the rewrite.

That auspicious moment was truly the beginning of my on-the-job training. Within the next six months I learned more about the film business than perhaps most grips learn in a lifetime. The most direct change was that I was no longer the accursed and lowly gripper, but was promoted to pre-production co-ordinator and pre-casting director.

First things first though, so I sat down and began rewriting my screenplay to the specifications laid down by the man who would be footing the bill. I quickly found out that the script I had originally tailored was a size 40 medium, and that our benefactor insisted on a 54 long, with bell-bottoms and satin running down the crease. Needless to say, we went through rewrite after rewrite until it was decided that "the kid" didn't make it as a screenwriter, and the scripting chores were passed down the line.

Meanwhile, as I slaved over a hot typewriter, Romero had done some wheeling and dealing and had obtained a production loan from a local Pittsburgh bank for another picture that he had written called **Jack's Wife.** He borrowed the money on the basis of the ensuing lensing of **The Mad People,** and the imminent release of **Vanilla.** At this point, Romero reasoned: Why make one picture if you can make two?

So while **Jack's Wife** commenced, I went to New York to do pre-casting. It was there, during a lunch break that I asked myself the cosmic question: What the hell am I mixed up in?

Mister Garment-District had been sitting in on the readings, which — opportunely — were being co-ordinated by a young lady-friend of his, and we had no more readings until one o'clock. After the last actor had padded out of the room, Mister Garment rose from his chair, stretched and reached for his briefcase which he snapped open. He pulled out a 38 cal. pistol with holster and strapped it on under his coat.

As I naively asked why he was doing that, he patted his gun and said that a fellow can't be too sure these days. Then we went to lunch next door, braving the adversities of New York street life for maybe ten or fifteen seconds.

In February 1972, I quit my job after the script was rewritten in a fashion so ruthless to my original intentions that only my characters' names were retained. Instead, the Army came out both villain and hero, and my poor beleaguered protagonists were reduced to simps.

After my departure, shooting began on the film, now retitled **The Crazies,** and not one single person from my casting sessions was selected to act in the film. Purely coincidence, I'm sure. And purely a coincidence that Mister Garment-District's young lady-friend eventually proved to be the long sought-after female lead for the picture.

Then **Vanilla** opened in Pittsburgh on March 1972 to an astonished house full of free passes. Nobody laughed or cried or felt a better person for having seen **Vanilla,** and the picture left the City of Steel after two quick weeks. I can only assume that the reason it lasted two weeks and not one was that Romero and his producers went to see the film several times to check the size of the audience, and *they* had to buy tickets to get in.

Vanilla disappeared on the Southern drive-in circuit after being retitled **The Affair,** and Romero began to wonder what all that hammering and sawing was outside his office window. Creditors building a gallows, perhaps?

Well, as they say, that's show business, and I'm very happy to have been part of the glamor and excitement that was Pittsburgh filmmaking.

Today, as one looks out across beautiful downtown Pittsburgh from high atop Mount Washington, one can dimly see the river-front offices of Latent Image, where George Romero once held court with **The Living Dead**. The three features that Romero released after **Living Dead**, have themselves died on the drive-in circuit. Mister Garment-District is no longer heard from, and I have yet to be paid in full for my screenplay.

One wonders if Romero's last three films aren't this very moment stumbling up against his house in the darkness and rain, fiendishly singing the refrain: "Where have all the young ghouls gone? Into ashes, everyone."

As for my own career, I continue to write screenplays for non-existent producers, continue to work as a cinematographer for those who can afford me, and continue to wonder ifperhaps I'm imagining all this.

The next time I run into any of you at a partyl I'll tell you some further horror stories of how I later went on to write a novelization based on Romero's screeplay that was based on my original script, and how the book was sold to a well-known paperback house, then rejected (yes, in that order) in three days due to some backstage manoeuvering by agents and friends alike. And, oh yes, remind me to mention how I contracted to photograph an X-rated film and a month after we finished shooting, the Supreme Court decided that pornography, read X-rated movies, was unclean, impure and a pollutant to the community mind.

But do me a favor and see that I've had a couple of drinks first before I start talking.

END

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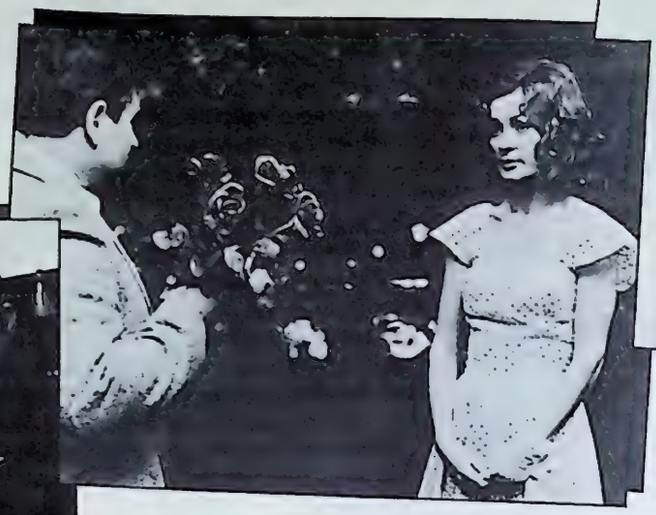

Warning for a Holy Whore

FASSBINDER'S

This year's Cannes Film Festival was the decisive international breakthrough for the young (b. 1946) West German director Rainer Werner Fassbinder. His new film, **Ali** or **Fear Eats Up Souls** (Angst essen Seele Auf) shared this year's critics' prize with Robert Bresson's **Lancelot du Lac** as the Festival's most outstanding works.

Although Fassbinder is only 28 years old, he has already — with his 23 full-length feature films — made twice as many films as the aging master Robert Bresson has made in his entire life. Moreover, Fassbinder has also found time for television dramas, theatre, radio-plays, and worked as an actor in his own and other directors' films. His production-tempo is thus wholly unique in film history, and one is tempted to believe that, at such a tempo, his films cannot be as thoroughly worked-out as they perhaps could be. But the reverse is the case: Fassbinder has extraordinary control over even the most minute details in his films. Nothing is left to the vicissitudes of chance, nor to improvisation; his dialogues and sequences are distilled to give the most naked and precise expression to the situation he wishes to depict. If he and Bresson have nothing else in common, they both understand the art of using their tools as sparingly as possible, to a degree such that their filmmaking is always a sort of purification process.

By Christian Braad Thomsen

Christian Braad Thomsen is a Danish film critic and director (his first feature being ***Dear Irene****). He has written a book on Godard and is now preparing one on Fassbinder, as well as being busy preparing his first work for the stage, a theatrical version of* ***The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant****. Thomsen interviewed Monte Hellman for us in Vol. 4 No. 2.*

It will be a long time before I forget the world premiere of then-23-year-old Fassbinder's first film, **Love is Colder than Death** (Liebe ist kalter als Tot) at the Berlin Film Festival in 1969. Seldom has a film been so mercilessly and so negatively received by an aroused premiere audience. Afterwards, I met Fassbinder, and told him that there were a few of us who liked his film. Nothing in this world could have mattered less to him. He had the kind of self-assurance which is not mere superficial bravado; he knew that his film was as it should be, and that one day the audience would probably catch up. During one of our first conversations he said that the only variety of film which interested him was the American, because it enjoyed strong public support. I was amazed to hear these words come from the mouth of this young West German rebel, who to an extreme degree was isolated from his audience, but Fassbinder remarked with devastating calmness that it took Claude Chabrol ten films to establish contact with his audience — and that he himself would probably succeed eventually. His self-confidence was subsequently borne out: with his eleventh film, **The Merchant of the Four Seasons**, and since, he has succeeded in winning a rather large audience without compromising his severe artistic principles.

Fassbinder's debut-film, **Love is Colder than Death**, has often been compared with Jean-Luc Godard's first film, **Breathless**, because both films introduced an unusually explosive period of production, and because both reveal a very personal reaction to the influence of the American gangster-film. The comparison is, however, unfair, for the reason that Fassbinder's debut came ten years after Godard's, and he had seen all of Godard's films before he began to make his own. Fassbinder does not begin where Godard began, but where he ended: with the "null-point" film **Le Gai Savoir**, which was shown at the Berlin festival the same year, and in which the film's language was reduced to a row of black pictures. When I asked Fassbinder what he thought of Godard's film, he answered without any intention of irony that the film would have been more consistent if *all* of its pictures had been black. There was no cheap criticism of Godard in the remark, only a respect for his filmic evolution.

Fassbinder's own debut-film was redolent of this very pictorial emptiness, a feeling that we are starting afresh from the absolute null-point, in an attempt to build something upon the smoking ruins at which Godard arrived and has bequeathed to his contemporaries. Fassbinder tells a gangster-story, but already in the first scene in his first film he demonstrates that his gangster-world is in reality a reflection of the bourgeois world, with which his gangsters only apparently break by their way of living, but from which they never ultimately can free themselves. The scene occurs at the home of the leader of a large underworld syndicate; Franz is led into the presence of the leader, who then addresses him in the same language a successful businessman would use when welcoming a new employee to the firm: "You will have a secure future if

Fear Eat Up Souls (Ali)

The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant

HOLY WHORES

you work for the syndicate. In principle, everything's very simple: you work and get paid regularly. Doesn't that sound good?" But Franz — who is played by Fassbinder himself — refuses to work for the syndicate, on the grounds that he would prefer to remain free. The rest of the film demonstrates the impossibility of freedom, the world being the way it is nowadays, and this is shown in static, unshakable images, in which the camera quite literally never moves. Only in the very last sequence does the camera slip into a quick pan, an abrupt break with the rest of the film, in order to formulate the dream of freedom. Fassbinder repeats this same, absolutely static image-conception in his second film, **Katzelmacher**, about a Greek immigrant worker whose arrival in a little German provincial town triggers the latent fascist tendencies of the inhabitants. The world of this little provincial town could be interchangeable with that of his gangster-film: it is nearly void of maturity and sentiment, and is wholly static. One passes time with card-games and idle chatter over the backyard-fence, a stagnation which compounds aggressions which are released by the arrival of the worker, who, incidentally, is also played by Fassbinder himself.

Fassbinder's subsequent films deepen and vary the central themes of his first two films: the boredom and emptiness which grope their way to violent expression. Throughout Fassbinder's films, frustrations are resolved by violent action: a policeman executes a couple of gangsters in cold blood in **Gods of the Plague** (Gotter der Pest); a Viet Nam veteran can't restrain his violence-hysteria in **The American Soldier** (Der Amerikanische Soldat); a film director moves in an atmosphere which throughout is impregnated by violence in **Warning for a Holy Whore** (Warnung vor eine heilige Nutte); soldiers attack peaceful village-dwellers in **Pioneers in Ingolstadt** (Pionere in Ingolstadt), acting on the rationale that, "when there's no war, you gotta make one;" and in all of his films, the men are consistent women-beaters. Violence and self-destruction go hand in hand through his films, perhaps most pointedly in **Why Did Herr R. Run Amuck?** (Warum lauft Herr R. Amok?), which deals with a little office-rat who leads a quite "normal" existence with wife and children, a good job, and lots of leisure hours, but at the same time with such aimless routine and pointlessness in his existence that one day, like a bolt from the blue, he murders his wife and children and hangs himself in the bathroom.

Fassbinder's first films will be remembered especially for their pictorial emptiness, for those endless static-camera sequences which purify situations of their "dramatic" content. Taking as his point of departure this emptiness, which is of an aesthetic and contextual nature, Fassbinder gradually discovers a succession of human feelings and social contexts which are more constructive. He additionally discovers a filmic language which slowly allows itself to be built up on the ruins left by Hollywood. After having made a whole film in which he utilizes a stationary camera, he discovers the pan's emotional significance; after having made an entire film in full and medium shot, he discovers the close-up's gripping beauty; and after having made films which are so languorously clipped that time practically stands still, "he discovers what one has forgotten in film: time," as one of the characters says of the director in **Warning for a Holy Whore.**

> ... not mere bravado; he knew that his film was as it should be, and that one day the audience would probably catch up...

Warning lies mid-way in Fassbinder's work, and it is a turning-point. It is Fassbinder's most obviously autobiographical film, since it deals with the making of a film and gives a non-idealized portrait of Fassbinder and of his permanent crew of actors and co-workers. Both in front of and behind the camera, Fassbinder prefers to use, like Ingmar Bergman, the same group of artists, who are on an intimate footing with his intentions: photographers Dietrich Lohmann and Michael Ballhaus, and a company of actors which includes Hanna Schygulla, Irm Hermann, Margit Carstensen, Ingrid Caven, Katrin Schaake, Ulli Lommel, Kurt Raab, Karl Scheydt, Hans Hirschmuller, Harry Bar and others. They constitute a well-seasoned crew and some of them have lived together in a commune, but **Warning** deals with the price they have to pay for functioning as a group, and with the tensions which, time and again, threaten to scatter

...his self-confidence was borne out; he has succeeded in winning a rather large audience without compromising his artistic principles.

them: "The whole thing collapsed during the shooting of **Whity**," says Fassbinder. "Everybody suddenly understood that what we had come together to achieve had in fact never been realized. And **Warning** deals in a way with the filming of **Whity**. It's about waking up and perceiving that those things of which one has always dreamed neither exist nor can easily be realized."

The similarities between **Warning** and François Truffaut's **La Nuit Américaine** are striking, although Fassbinder's film was made three years before Truffaut's. In the title's warning against the sacred whore — where the "whore" is the art of film — lies the same profound ambivalence toward film which Truffaut expresses: film is a whore who constantly subjects one to temptations which make one forget reality, or which make one's relationship to it unreal. Fassbinder's film-crew in **Warning** are like ghosts, half unreal existences lost in their own dreamlike universe, and powerless in their half-attempts to reach out after a form of concrete reality. While the crew sits around waiting for the director to come and put them to work, they will kill time with chit-chat which conceals the fact that their only real interest in one another is of a sexual nature — not a meaningful erotic experience of one another, but just sex to help pass the time while one waits for life's actual fulfillment: filming, the meeting with the sacred whore. One of them talks with a Spanish worker about the importance of political contact with the working-class, but his phrases function only as a pretext for getting into bed with him. Factory workers are people one goes to bed with, and Cuba Libre is the name of a drink which they all guzzle throughout the film. In short, social and political realities have no chance of penetrating into this hermetically sealed universe; they are transformed into sex and drunkenness. When the director arrives in a helicopter in the first sequence, he is actually represented as a heavenly messenger, who brings the longed-for plan for the ordering of their existence. The plan turns out to be the notion that everyone should work together democratically on the film, but this, too, proves to be just as half-hearted and jargon-like as the rest of the crew's chatter. The director's dream of delegating the film's creation to all is just an excuse for his self-pitying plaint, that it is always *he* who has to do it all. In reality, none of the others gets an opportunity to participate in the decision-making process. Everyone is thus in the same boat. The film-crew's dreams, which might originally have been real and sympathetic, have become perverted, introverted and insincere. Their relation to each other and to film is incestuous, self-infecting and claustrophobic. They talk about worker-solidarity and at the same time knock the waiter down when he refuses to serve them more drinks. And, just as in the American Westerns they have grown up with, they nonchalantly toss glasses over their shoulders when they've emptied them — except that on their way to their rooms they trip among the fragments and cut their fingers.

Warning is a merciless, brutal and self-critical film, but behind the brutality is hidden — as always in Fassbinder's work — a great and slightly embarassed tenderness for the characters he depicts. The film's characters seem to arrive at a temporary solution, when the actual filming gets under way, for this effort has, *quand même*, a kind of meaning. What destroys Fassbinder's characters in his earlier films is their disjunctive relation to their work, that is, to their own creative energies.

"The characters in my films are kaputtypes, because they don't have work, but live in a world in which they *must* work," Fassbinder says. "It destroys them. We live in a society in which we must work, one way or another, but my characters can't stand it because they experience it as meaningless. That's why they have no 'anchor', and merely degenerate. The craft of filmmaking offers the greatest possible individual freedom our society has to offer, which is why I chose it as a subject. But the most important question today is, how does one destroy our society. When society is changed, people's consciousness will also be changed, but as long as it all merely exists so that some must work in order that others may profit by their efforts, then there is not much else to discuss than the alteration of this situation."

The merciless self-criticism which Fassbinder indulges in in **Warning** is not feigned. Although the film deals with hollow phrases, it is not itself hollow. He takes its self-criticism seriously, and in his subsequent films he is finally prepared to address himself to a large audience without compromising. He has now refined his severe form, cleansed it of the formal provocations which the earlier films contained, and has developed a language which both speaks to the viewers and realizes his own intentions. His next film was **The Merchant of the Four Seasons**, a simple, precise, and powerful critical description of the German petite bourgeoisie. It depicts a way of life which channels people into narrow parameters within which they are inhibited and crippled. The protagonist is a little fruit vendor who has been mistreated by the women in his life: the mother who forces her son to take a high-school degree, although he would rather go to trade-school — a situation which eventually lands him in the Foreign Legion. A young prostitute seduces him after he returns and has gotten a job on the police force, which results in the loss of his job. The love of his life refuses to marry him because he finally has become a fruit vendor, who drives around hawking his wares, and the woman he ultimately marries unjustly suspects him of infidelity. The women in his life represent respective defects of the petite-bourgeoisie which at last smother the little merchant.

Besides being a tale of individual suffering, the film is also a pointed unmasking of bourgeois family life, of the hypocrisy, ambitions, and essential coldness of the family's existence. It is Fassbinder's most apparently naturalistic film, while at the same time the naturalism swings over into a stylized pop-artish pathos of great originality and direct emotional appeal. Fassbinder often allows individual scenes to unfold into something resembling the icons of the bourgeois life, such as the sequence in which a housewife stands in her kitchen preparing meat, or that in which the virtuous son protects the women from the fruit vendor's anticipated attack; or the repetitive Sunday-afternoon situations over coffee and cakes; or, perhaps even more strongly, when the little girl opens the bedroom door, to discover her mother in bed with a stranger, and innocently cries, "Mommy!" The film's most pathetic image is that of the fruit vendor proposing to his great love with an arm-load of roses in his grasp, and being spurned.

At the same time he made this film about woman's repression of man, Fassbinder made **The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant** (Die Bittern Tranen der Petra von Kant), which deals with women's liberation, and with *their* repression at the hands of men. These two films must be seen in context, because they demonstrate that Fassbinder is not dominated by the current trendy, over-simplifying and jargon-ridden evaluations of our society's social mechanisms. "Emancipation is not just a problem for women," he says, "but for all people. I frequently get irritated by this eternal rubbish about women's emancipation, because the world is not just a question of women against men, but of rich against poor, of the oppressed against the oppressors. And there are just as many oppressed men as women."

Petra von Kant will be recalled as one of film-history's great love-stories, and a short description of it here will not be able to do it justice. It would require an entire review to convey an impression of its visual beauty, its humane profundity and comprehensiveness, and its great maturity. I've seen the film ten or fifteen times, and I find it possible to enjoy it like a piece of music from which the emotional depth does not depart, just because one is well-studied in its surface significance. **Petra** is, among other things, the most successful example of filmatic di-

alogue I have ever seen. It was originally written by Fassbinder for the theatre, and takes place entirely on one set, Petra's bedroom-study. It has nonetheless been realized to an extraordinary degree as film, rather than as a filmed play. Pictorial composition, camera movement and editing are the constant instruments of the film's intentions, and the player's performance is throughout determined by the film medium, pathetic and stylized, most fortunately free of the over-dimensioned and theatrical.

Petra von Kant (Margit Carstensen) is divorced, a clothing-designer on the way up. She lives alone with her servant-girl, Marlene (Irm Hermann), who is Petra's femme-à-tout-faire, and carries out her slightest wish without so much as uttering a word throughout the film. Petra begins in a reasonable and adult fashion to tell her girlfriend about her newly-won freedom, and about her sensible outlook on relationships between lovers. Love dies when there is no equality, complete openness and intimacy existing between both parties. Theory, however, is one thing; another is to utilize the knowledge one has struggled to achieve. When Petra falls in love with Karin, a working-class girl, her theories about life collapse like the proverbial card-house. She wants to become mistress over her beloved, and to stand guard over her with a steadily intensifying jealousy, and in the end Petra is abandoned by Karin. Petra learns — once more — that love and the need for possession cannot be reconciled, that people simply must be free in their relationships to one another. She gives the servant-girl, Marlene, her freedom, and proposes that for the future they should share all their work and pleasure with each other, so that neither exploits the other. Marlene immediately and without a word takes leave of Petra, whom the film then closes upon in total isolation.

The film's conclusion has been much discussed, the more so as Fassbinder's original theatre version ended otherwise. In the theatre, the story bore a classical happy-ending, in which Marlene stayed with Petra. Why does she depart in the film-version? "Because Marlene accepts her rôle as the oppressed and exploited party," Fassbinder says, "she fears the freedom which she has been offered, because freedom necessarily entails that one consider one's existence, something never previously required of her. She had always acted in response to commands, and never had the responsibility of making her own decisions. Therefore, she is afraid of freedom, and when she abandons Petra at the end I envision her as going out, not to freedom, but to yet another slave-situation. Many viewers have concluded that she frees herself at the end, but I don't believe it at all; it would simply be too optimistic and utopian to believe that someone who has thought only what others have told her to for thirty years could suddenly opt for freedom."

Stylistically **Petra von Kant** is in many respects the film which Carl Th. Dreyer attempted, but which he in my opinion did not succeed in making, in **Gertrud**. The dialogue has been brilliantly reduced to a maxim-like simplicity, without loss to its emotional complexity. The long, fixed camera-positions and precise picture composition chisel this love-story out in stone, but perhaps the most remarkable quality of the film is that it deals with some of the seemingly "eternal" questions, while at the same time Fassbinder demonstrates how the characters' understanding of love is intimately connected with their social rôles. This thorough-going insistence upon the connection between peoples' social existence and their emotional consciousness exemplifies Fassbinder's assertion that, "when society is changed, people's consciousness will also be changed."

With **Petra von Kant** Fassbinder inaugurated his filmic cooperation with the brilliant actress Margit Carstensen — one of the few of his co-workers who have not been with him from the beginning. Together with Margit Carstensen he has made a variety of productions for television, theatre, and film, all of which are contributions to the discussion of women's liberation. For television he made his own piece *Bremer Freiheit*, a strongly stylized drama about a woman in the last century who puts poison in the coffee of all the men who stand in the way of her personal freedom. This ends in her poisoning herself, because such personal violence-hysteria leads nowhere. At about the same time, Fassbinder directed Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler* for a Berlin theatre, and made the film **Martha** from his own manuscript, about a woman who is systematically oppressed by her husband and deprived of every aspect of personality. Finally, he directed an extremely personal interpretation of Ibsen's *A Doll's House* for television. "Ibsen's piece doesn't primarily deal with the emancipation of women," says Fassbinder provocatively, "everybody in the play, including Nora, needs to be freed, and it is just not the case that at the end of the day Nora has found the true light of revelation. At the end she is just as soft in the noodle as before, and I haven't been able to discover anywhere in Ibsen that she's supposed to turn into some kind of suffragette. In my version of the play I had to scratch a bit of the text; for example, Nora doesn't leave her husband at the end. She stays, because where in the world would she go? She has no actual possibilities. In *this* world people usually try to make some sort of 'arrangement', which usually is even worse than going. One ought to criticize that sort of 'arrangement' instead of saying that separation is a possibility — for it is *not* a possibility. People have so much difficulty being alone that one rather ought to consider how they should live together, than how they should part."

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In his treatment of the problems central to women's liberation, Fassbinder has continued to expand his criticism of the individualistic revolt which has characterized his work right from the first gangster-film. The individualistic revolt achieves nothing, or at the most it serves — by the fate it meets — to sketch a caricature of the individualistic society which the rebel attempts to defy. Fassbinder defined this with the utmost symbolic clarity in his American-South melodrama, **Whity**, in which a Negro slave shoots his oppressors and flees with the town whore. But instead of making common cause with other victims of oppression, they simply degenerate in the desert, where they dance a last, pathetic dance together before dying of hunger and thirst.

Fassbinder takes the problem up for renewed analysis in one of his most ambitious and popular works, five feature films made for German tv which go under the common title of **Eight Hours Do Not Make a Day** (Acht Stunden sind kein Tag). The five films compose a family series which became Fassbinder's breakout from the art-ghetto in which he had found himself. The films became enormously popular among the tv audience, and it was through them that Fassbinder succeeded in realizing his original and long sought-after goal: to break down the false antithesis between art and entertainment, by creating entertainment with intellectual content, and by formulating his ideas in an entertaining way. **Eight Hours** is about a German working-class family, their internal familial tensions, and their problems at work. Without frightening the viewers away with political slogans or complicated theoretical rubbish, Fassbinder had succeeded, interestingly and entertainingly, in illustrating how his characters are able to wage the political war in the here and now, armed only with sound good sense and a bit of fantasy and inventiveness. The perpetual chorus which runs through these five films, each of two hours duration, is the necessity of working together in order to get one's legitimate demands actualized. Solidarity makes strength, and it is by means of this internal unity that Fassbinder's characters are able to triumph over their opponents, whether these are private employers or public bureaucrats.

One ought perhaps to refer to a couple of examples: Jochen and his comrades from work are to do a particular job in a very short period of time, and shall therefore get a special bonus. By using a bit of ingenuity, they succeed in rationalizing the process, so that they can do the job in considerably less time than it would have taken, after which the boss decides to scrap the bonus arrangement, since the job didn't demand so much time after all. In order to secure the bonus, which they feel they're entitled to, the workers begin to arrange a series of mysterious accidents and mistakes at the factory, so that the entire production is threatened. The workers win their struggle! In another of the films, Grandmother and her lover, Gregor, try to find a flat, but can't get one because of their insignificant pensions. However, they do find crowds of children in the streets, and a library which is to be condemned because people don't have time to read. Grandmother and Gregor launch a squatting-operation, fix up a nursery-school in the library, get the kids off the street and make a place for themselves to live. The city sends out the police to deal with this daring breach of the peace, but all the women on the block join together to defend their nursery-school. And, because they stand together, they stand strongly — and win.

Fassbinder's tv films are told with a charming, almost dream-like optimism, but he never completely loses contact with the realities, and in the last of the films he clearly demarcates the limits of the spontaneous, human solidarity with which he works. The upper limit is, in his eyes, the right of private ownership of the means of production. When the workers attempt an attack on private ownership, they are shown to be powerless because of their lack of political knowledge. Fassbinder had originally planned to delve into this problem in three additional television films, for which he has written the scripts, but German tv decided not to produce them. Fassbinder himself believes that there were political motives behind this decision.

There is a conspicuous difference between Fassbinder's feature films and his television films. **Eight Hours Don't Make a Day** presents a much more optimistic side than his feature films. Why this distinctive difference? "Because all of the films and plays I've written were designed for an intellectual audience," Fassbinder says, "and with the intellectuals one can easily allow oneself to be pessimistic and end without hope, because an intellectual is both prepared and inclined to reflect over it. But for the large audience which television offers, it would have been reactionary — nearly criminal, in fact — to represent the world as futile. Their world looks pretty futile to them in the first place, so one's just got to try to encourage them and say, 'you've got possibilities anyway. You've got power to bring to bear, because your oppressors are dependent upon you.' What is an employer without employees? Nothing. On the other hand, one can well imagine workers without employers. This attitude was the principal reason that for the first time I made something positive, hopeful. With an audience of 25 million ordinary people, you can't allow yourself anything else."

Fassbinder's experience in the medium of television seems also to have influenced the trend of his future production. An example is the film which Fassbinder exhibited this year in the Cannes Film Festival's official competition, **Fear Eats Up Souls** (Angst essen Seele auf), known as **Ali** in America. It deals with a bizarre love relationship between a young Moroccan immigrant worker and an old German charwoman. These two lonely creatures' relationship provokes the latent fascist tendencies present in the pair's bourgeois environment. The film is based upon a real event, which Fassbinder earlier had one of his characters recount in the gangster-film, **The American Soldier**. In reality this love-story came to an end with the murder of the old woman, but in the film Fassbinder allows love to win over the environment's pettiness and intolerance. This is in harmony with his experiences with television, and is an important element in Fassbinder's artistic programme, that one ought to make films which give people the courage to live their lives. But in spite of his declared good will, it's difficult to make films which end 100% happily, the way our world looks today. There lies a fruitful artistic tension for Fassbinder in the conflict between his own wish for things to be resolved as well as possible, and the limited possibilities for happy endings which our everyday life in the Western world provides. In the last scene, the Moroccan immigrant lies in the hospital with an incurable stomach ulcer, caused by the human and work-originated stresses he has encountered in Germany; his old German wife faithfully attends at his side.

It is unbelievable that, at an age of 28, Fassbinder has written and directed more for film, theatre, and television than most directors achieve in their entire lives. His knowledge of people, and his ability to formulate this knowledge artistically is most remarkable. It would be unreasonable to speculate about what Fassbinder will produce in the future; in the short space of time during which he has worked in those media, which he utilizes to perfection, he has given us experiences and observations which can safely be compared with the best in film history.

So to conclude, let us allow Margit Carstensen to round off this introduction to Fassbinder's films with a personal sketch of Fassbinder as she knows him:

"What attracts me about his work is the way he perceives people, the love with which he describes them. He cares fantastically for every single figure in his films, even for the unattractive ones. Also, he radiates unbelievable amounts of love, goodness and family-feeling. In Germany, the ordinary audience sees him as a regular 'citizen-terror' — a wild man, a dangerous fellow, but he actually has a great deal of respect for the family, and really quite traditional attitudes about togetherness, the consideration that we owe to one another, and the friendliness one ought to show to others. The unique thing about Fassbinder is that he always has the courage to be just as he is, and thus ask to bear the burden of his own faults — in other words, he is true to himself. And practically no one has the strength to be that."

END

HEMINGWAY'S THE KILLERS X3

Each version of The Killers shows... how a popular artist looks at a basic story, changes and adapts it to meet his own needs and those of his contemporary society.

by Stuart M. Kaminsky

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There have been two films based on Ernest Hemingway's short story "The Killers". An examination of the short story and the two films is particularly interesting in generic consideration, because each version represents a response in popular art by an author of merit using the same basic material for narrative. All three versions were made as entertainment. All, I believe, are expressions of generic significance.

It is interesting and revealing to examine how a popular artist looks at a basic story, changes and adapts it to meet his own needs and those of his contemporary society. The three versions are approximately twenty years apart, which adds a dimension of distance during which significant cultural and historical changes took place.

Hemingway

Hemingway's short story appeared in "Scribner's Magazine" in 1927. The Mark Hellinger-produced, Robert Siodmak-directed film appeared in 1946. Don Siegel's film appeared in 1964. Both films were made for Universal Studios, and both, officially, are called **Ernest Hemingway's The Killers.**

Hemingway's story is brief, direct, unexplained. It is left to the reader to understand what has happened and what it means. The killers themselves are, I believe, intentionally pulp fiction figures. They have derby hats, exhibit hard-boiled sarcasm and posture, and perform for themselves and the people they terrorize. Interestingly, Carlos Baker, the Hemingway critic and biographer, has called Hemingway's story and the novel "Little Caesar" by W. R. Burnett (on which the film was based), the only enduring works about American gangsters.

Hemingway's two killers, Al and Max, suddenly appear in the diner, much like the appearance of Edward G. Robinson and Douglas Fairbanks at the start of **Little Caesar**. Hemingway's Al and Max are gross, confident, cold lawless extensions of the big city. They display a cheap, fascinating amorality that has no fear of law or man.

It should be noted that Hemingway's story appeared in print just before, actually a few months before, the advent of the commercial sound film. The killers were not, therefore, posturing from what they had seen in films. The gangster in silent film days was radically different from what he became with the appearance of **Little Caesar**. The silent gangster films were basically romances with little or no consideration of the gangster himself as a tragic or ironically tragic figure. Silent gangster films did not see the gangster as wisecracking and lower class. Even a film so advanced in many ways as Josef von Sternberg's **Underworld** which appeared the same year as Hemingway's story, presented the gangster as a social symbol redeemed by self-sacrificing romanticism.

Hemingway's story, however, finds its meaning not in the killers or even in the victim, Swede, whom they have come to kill. The focus of the story is Nick Adams, the boy in the diner, the boy at the core of the series of initiation stories by Hemingway. Nick watches the drama unfold and is powerless to save Swede. Both the killers and Swede accept their roles as assassins and victim. Nick can only watch in confused amazement. He doesn't know what is happening. The only explanation Swede gives him is, "I got in wrong." Roles, fate are accepted by killers and victim. Nick is exposed to life as a Greek tragedy. The small town is not safe. No one is safe from fate and no one can do anything about it except face it with dignity as Swede does.

Nick can only run at the end of the story, try to evade the initiation experience. The last lines of the story are:

"I'm going to get out of this town," Nick said.

"Yes," said George. "That's a good thing to do."

"I can't stand to think about him waiting in the room and knowing he's going to get it. It's too damned awful."

"Well," said George, "you better not think about it."

To "think about it,"for Hemingway, is to lose confidence in the beliefs of self determination, good and evil which had sustained you. As St. Exupéry said about horror, which is what Nick encounters, you don't feel it when you experience it. It becomes horror when it is passed and you have time to think about it. Intimately, Nick's horror is in the realization through the experience of watching it happen that Swede's way of facing fate is the only possible response. It is a harsh code to absorb and accept and yet it is the one Hemingway returned to frequently in his work.

The Film Noir

Hemingway sold the film rights of his short story. The man who obtained the film rights was Mark Hellinger, a journalist, film producer and screenwriter who had worked on such Warner Brothers films as **High Sierra** and **The Roaring Twenties**. Interestingly, Hellinger wanted a young director he knew named Don Siegel to do the film adaptation of the Hemingway story, but Siegel was under contract to Warner Brothers and could not get free to do it.

Hellinger then turned to a German-born director, Robert Siodmak. Andrew Sarris, in his book "The American Cinema", indicates his belief that Siodmak's direction in the '40s was indistinguishable from that of Jules Dassin in **Brute Force** and **Naked City**. One possible reason may be that both of the Dassin films mentioned were produced by Hellinger, as was Siodmak's version of **The Killers**. The similarity can possibly be found in the fact that Hellinger wanted a particular dark atmosphere, an atmosphere which had its roots in German expressionism and which was manifested in heavy shadows and artificial, controlled shooting (where possible) on sets instead of location. The films of the cycle were also notable for the relatively unambiguous nature of the characters in them.

Siodmak was known as an "atmosphere" director, one who liked working on sets with controlled lighting and striking camera angles. Siodmak films, both before and after **The Killers**, are dark expressions bigger than life. **The Killers** was one of several Siodmak-directed films of the late '40s that reflected this atmosphere. The films included **Phantom Lady, The Spiral Staircase, The Dark Mirror, Cry of the City** and **Thelma Jordan**.

Siodmak was the master of this style which emerged with the postwar feeling of pessimism in various genres, the style of the Film Noir. The Film Noir usually centered on a central, hard-boiled American cop, detective or insurance man finding himself in a sick society, going into its darkest corners, ferreting out the corruption which often engulfs or destroys him (if he falls victim to greed or, more often, a corrupt temptress) or leaves him cynically self-satisfied. The Film Noir brought to the forefront of popular culture the non-heroic hero. Hellinger-Siodmak's **The Killers** was one of the first of the post-war cynical Films Noir.

The opening of the film is like that of the Hemingway story, but there are important differences:

1) The total sequence is done indoors, even the outdoor approach to the diner is on a set, which gives an oppressive air to the sequence quite different from the intentionally pulp fiction atmosphere of the story and reflects the Film Noir.

2) The killers are not, as in Hemingway, comic-serious posers. They are deadly serious with no overtones of irony about the way they see themselves or we see them.

3) Nick Adams is not the focus of the incident in the film. In fact, we do not see Nick's reaction after visiting the Swede. The camera does not move to him, seek him out. Attention and focus shift from the killers to Swede, and rest only briefly on Nick, Sam the cook, and George the diner owner.

4) Swede is more explicit about his death being part of an act in the past. "I did something wrong once," is his comment, not "I got in wrong," as in the short story.

5) We see Swede killed. The horror is not left to imagination. It is explicit. The screenplay even called for the killing to be handled "à la Siodmak", displaying shadows, a restricted setting, a horror from the past in action and our viewing of an expression of that horror, not just a hint of it.

One center of the film is the insurance agent, played by Edmond O'Brien, not Nick Adams. He is an archetypal Film Noir protagonist. The mystery nags him. He is driven by his desire to understand, to get the story straight, to sort out the history of the mystery of Swede's death, to understand the past. Understanding the dark past and making some sense of it is essential to the Film Noir hero.

O'Brien masks his quest for understanding behind the pragmatic statement that he is out to save money for the insurance company. However, he never discusses his reason for the zeal with which he attacks the problem and, in fact, at one point his boss tells him that even if he solves the mystery it will do the company no good because the loss has already been figured into the future, computed. In spite of the knowledge that it will have no fiscal meaning, O'Brien goes on to risk life and job to get to the truth.

As in most Films Noir, the world is black and confused. It is up to O'Brien, a man with no family we know of, no background, a valued lone investigator, to make sense of it. Hemingway's emphasis was on the acceptance of hopelessness with dignity, a hopelessness which need not and possibly cannot be understood. In the Films Noir in general and **The Killers** in particular, the need to get the story straight is compulsive. Not knowing is unacceptable, dignity is insufficient. Man must get to the heart of the blackness.

O'Brien is the modern man, the determined, often frightened man. Just before he bursts in on the killer Dum-Dum (Jack Lambert) who he knows is searching the Swede's room, we are shown O'Brien alone, his defenses down, hesitating about whether to plunge in and face the past in the room of death. Behind his public cynicism and wisecracking is a private fear.

In contrast, we have the other central figure of the film, the Swede, played by Burt Lancaster. Swede is a silent, slightly stupid man of honour out of the past. Swede is an anachronism with his roots in ideas of self-respect and dignity. He is a boxer proud of never having been knocked out in the ring and he willingly takes the rap and goes to jail for his girl, both of which gestures are seen by his colleagues as foolish. Swede is very much a Hemingway hero, while O'Brien is very much a Film Noir hero. Swede dies because he has no place in the dark world of the late 1940s. O'Brien, the man of this period of darkness, gets revenge for Swede, relives his experiences through flashback, befriends his friends, makes enemies of his enemies, and is attracted by the girl who destroyed Swede. But O'Brien is a step ahead of them. His cynicism and caution; his lack of trust in humanity saves him, reaffirms him as the man of his time. It is his, O'Brien's world. He is his company's best investigator. Even the police do what he tells them to do.

In the course of his probing into the past, O'Brien leaves a trail of death behind him. In the end, however, he succeeds; he understands the mystery of the darkness, a mystery which the viewer of the late '40s could not understand in his own dark world beyond the screen and theater. O'Brien evens the score, gets a cynical weekend off, and then, we know, will be back to ferreting out more of the unending illness of society.

Another important aspect of the Film Noir is manifest in Siodmak's **The Killers**. There is no character change. There is none intended. Layers are peeled away to reveal a rotten core of betrayal. Doom prevails in words, lighting, music and characterizations. Colfax, Lubinsky, the manager, Charleston, Blinky, Dum-Dum, are all expressions of a different, unchanging cynical response through which O'Brien must plow and survive. The killers themselves, like Swede, are anachronistic. They are too straightforward. The death of Al and Max is inevitable and they are as doomed as the monsters in '40s horror films.

Visually, the film is striking as an example of noir. Everything is indoors, even the street scenes, with the exception of one robbery. The feeling of control, constriction, darkness are extended into individual shots. The shot of Nick coming to warn Swede that the killers have arrived is, apparently, done with one shot — including Nick's run through the alley and a pan in the room to meet him coming through the door. The shot demon-

strates visually that, within the context of the film, there is no essential difference between the darkness of the outside and that of the inside.

The Terror of Daylight

Almost ten years after the Hellinger-Siodmak film, the Film Noir was gone. There was a new sensibility, a new national fear and reaction to be explored. The Siegel-directed version of **The Killers** was, significantly, intended to be the first feature for television. But because of President Kennedy's assassination, it was pulled from television showing and opened in Europe. Gradually, over the years since its release in 1964, it has picked up a reputation and following.

Drawn from the 1946 version, the Siegel film is similar to that of the Hellinger-Siodmak Film Noir, in many ways reflecting those elements of noir which had persisted. Siegel wanted to reduce possible comparison between the two versions by calling the film **Johnny North**, but the studio, which owned the rights to the use of Hemingway's name with the story, refused.

The similarities to the earlier film:

1) The flashback technique of getting to the mystery is used.

2) The woman is still seen as betrayer. She double-crosses the victim and the investigator.

3) The investigation is a matter of someone trying to understand, again, why the victim didn't run.

4) The victim is an athlete, a man of action who cannot control a duplicious society with his animal ability and his American sense of fairness and sportsmanship.

The differences are major, and at the core of Siegel's sensibility and that of many films of the '60s:

1) The Hemingway opening, instead of being used as a referent to open the film, is only vaguely evident in the brutal beginning. The killers are not talkative, do not pose. They are businesslike, official.

2) The killer, not the investigator, is the central figure.

3) Darkness does not prevail. The film is in color. It is bright. Death and fear come in the daylight, in the most matter-of-fact locations.

4) Much of the film is shot outdoors, on location instead of in a studio.

5) The evil of the film is not defined so clearly as in the earlier film. It is not as easy to say who is good and who is bad. There is even some sympathy shown for Browning (Ronald Reagan), who betrays the athlete.

By 1964, into the cold war, after the President's death, literature and film were dealing with men who had fallen back into corporate identification for protection to shield themselves from the confusion of the world. The films of the period increasingly dealt with the fight to salvage self-respect, and identity, to find some meaningful anti-social values in the face of the corporate onslaught, the fear of 1984, population growth, mass society.

In Siegel's **The Killers**, Lee Marvin does what O'Brien did, but Marvin — a brutal man unlike the gentle O'Brien figure — is clearly not a hero in either the Hemingway or Film Noir sense. He is a brutal murderer, a man who has set his world in order and is disturbed by the actions of a man who does not act in the way he thinks people should. Marvin is a man in control of his feelings, a modern, corporate killer with an attaché case, a nice suit and sunglasses.

Marvin is an automatic man, disturbed by the actions of a victim which confuse him. He seeks the money that the unraveling of the mystery will bring him, as O'Brien had sought the money for his company, but Marvin keeps asking why a man would die like that — without running, without fear.

Marvin does what O'Brien did, but gains information not by friendliness and guile, but by force, the tool of his time. He is a modern American protagonist, violent, controlled. He is a central figure, but certainly not a hero.

He lives through Cassavetes' experience, but his élan is violent. His threat to the predatory woman (Angie Dickinson) indicates that, like O'Brien, he trusts no one. But in the Siegel film the threat is played as a love scene. Violence and passion are consciously equated. His threat of death is almost a kiss. Like Cassavetes, Marvin is, eventually, betrayed by the woman and dies from the betrayal, but he exacts revenge for both. He is not a hero worthy of survival as O'Brien had been.

As with other films of this period, time pulses throughout. The fear of death and destruction are central. "I haven't got the time," Charlie tells his victims who want to talk. The song of the film is "Too Little Time". Charlie, Marvin, is 53, feels his age and knows that anything can happen in a violent world where leaders are assassinated, murder takes place on the streets. Charlie, like Swede, has a code, however, and in that lies his merit, his only affirmation. Charlie is a man of his word. It is a bizarre word, but it is the only thing one has left in the world of violence.

In contrast, his partner Clu Gulager is young, not driven. He is an untroubled professional: bizarre, uncontrolled, undisciplined. Charlie becomes an almost unconscious instrument of vengeance. He never kills without a reason, be it to extract revenge or to gain money. There is no apparent joy in the job; it is simply a job. Gulager represents the unknown variable, the death that can spring out without reason.

Like Charlie the killer, man must create a code of behaviour. There are no heroes. There is no way to define good and evil. The question becomes one of self-understanding. Siegel's film explores concepts of good and evil, questions the value of defining morality in a manner that led the way for such films as **Bonnie and Clyde, The Dirty Dozen, The Wild Bunch, McCabe and Mrs. Miller, The French Connection** and a host of films which used the horror of violence to question basic American concepts.

Hemingway's definition of grace under pressure, and in the face of death, is unacceptable in the Siegel film — as is the Hellinger-Siodmak Film Noir conclusion of the cynical hero going through the black world and salvaging a vestige of light. The world is not like that. Death is by day in **The Killers** of 1964, there is no sanctuary in light.

The colors and lighting in the film do not direct our attitudes; they are bright, uniform, flashing, modern, cold. The atmosphere does not inform us; the world simply is, multilayered and deceptive. Marvin cuts through it with violence as do Bonnie and Clyde, McCabe, Dustin Hoffman in **Straw Dogs**, Burt Reynolds and John Voight in **Deliverance**, and Steve McQueen in **The Getaway**.

The images of the film are large, looming, screen-filling. The guns of the Siegel film are silent and death is seen in closeup, not in medium shots or long shots. There is neither expressionism nor literary allegory. Death is horror; violence is something we live with. As the Indian says in William Saroyan's play, "The Time of Your Life", there may be no sidewalk outside the saloon. The world may be gone. We can never be sure in a world where real heroes are killed by madmen and a car can fly around a corner killing a man on the way to the drug store. "There's no foundation up and down the line," says Saroyan's Indian.

The Siegel film and the others which follow it deal with the problem of stripping away postures, including those of business, and economic security, to reveal the shallowness of modern existence which has no foundation in love or morality and desperately needs one.

Thus, the basic story of Ernest Hemingway, written in 1927, has been the source of both personal and cultural expression in three very distinct decades and by three distinctive, and distinguished, creators.

END

PUTTING JANIS TOGETHER

The real challenge was to show
how singing the blues was as natural an activity to Janis Joplin
as burgling was for Richard Nixon.

THE INSIDE STORY

By Christmas time, **Janis**, a film about (in order of importance) the music and the personality of Janis Joplin, will have opened in Canada, where it was made. It's a good film, probably the best rock documentary made to date, and is almost assured good notices and grosses. But by that time the movie's farther-reaching commercial importance may have been confirmed in the US, where it will already have been in release some two months.

Janis is an emotionally appealing but non-sensational study of the best white blues singer of her generation and it bears no trace of the discord and hassle from which it emerged. The man who put it together by (uncharacteristically for a Canadian) piling gamble upon gamble, is a 62-year-old veteran named Frank (Budge) Crawley. He feels that the film, following the current success of the Canadian-made **Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz**, will leave in Los Angeles and elsewhere the impression "that maybe those Canadians can do something right after all." This realization struck him, he says, during his negotiations with Universal, who will distribute the picture worldwide except for Canada.

"After three weeks of talks", he remembers, "they were still calling me Budge Baby, and they only call you Budge Baby when it's going to make money."

The story of the making of **Janis** is one of those incredibly complicated yarns in which it frequently appears as though everyone involved is about to litigate against everyone else. It began four years ago with Festival Express '70, a government-sponsored troupe of performers who were to travel by train across much of the country giving concerts. The original plan called for them to begin in Montreal, but Mayor Jean Drapeau shut them out of his city because of the FLQ crisis then in full swing. Instead, they began in Toronto and worked their way as far as Calgary. The cast included Joplin, The Band, the Grateful Dead and assorted Canadians such as Ian and Sylvia.

This scheme prompted a Toronto entrepreneur to organize a company called Festival Express Productions for the purpose of tagging along on the train to make a film. The entrepreneur was lawyer Willem Poolman who, though he'd never made a film, had been involved in the Canadian movie world as a 16mm distributor. Poolman talked Design Craft, a part of the mammoth Maclean-Hunter communications complex, into a contract for shooting. Other partners included Kenny Walker and the two department store heirs, Thor and George Eaton. Mind you, this and what follows is the barest outline.

By the time the train was in Winnipeg, the production company had run out of money. It had $35,000 in debts including a $15,000 debt to Maclean-Hunter for sound recording, and legal fees would eventually total another 35 gees. "The Eatons threw Poolman out a couple of times," recalls Crawley who became a secondary creditor by lending money to one of the primary ones. "The whole thing was very confused." The equipment house hadn't been paid. Neither had the lab nor the three cameramen, one of whom had worked on **Woodstock**, another of whom, left staring at a hundred thousand feet of film, removed himself and the Joplin footage home to England for a while.

The film had yet to be processed, and at least one lab refused to touch it for fear of possible legal complications. The result was that the public receiver stored it in a Jack Frost food locker where it remained for three years. In the meantime, of course, Joplin had died from what was ruled an accidental heroin overdose. In the meantime, also, Budge Crawley had taken another financial gamble.

In Canadian terms, Crawley is one of the pioneers. An accountant by training, he is a big barrel-chested man with a face like that of Walter Huston in **The Treasure of Sierra Madre**, further enhanced by Sam Ervin eyebrows. His company began in 1931 when he started shooting industrial film for free, just to get the experience, and processing it at night in his bathtub. It is now a prosperous film production and distribution operation with offices in Ottawa and Toronto, and the list of "sponsored" films it has turned out fills nearly ten columns of the entry for Crawley in one biographical dictionary.

Crawley has a well-earned reputation as one of the Canadian film industry's sharpest and least malicious producers and as the one most willing to take risks. This last side of him manifested itself at a creditors' meeting when he offered to put up the money, up to a limit of $40,000, to print and sync the film and see what was there. What was there, he recalls, "was some pretty good stuff of Janis and The Band, both of whom were Albert Grossman artists." There was, in all, between ten thousand and fifteen thousand feet of the two acts. Crawley got control of the footage and Grossman, accompanied by Robbie Robertson of The Band, came up to screen it. The Band decided they could do better making a film about themselves alone and declined to grant the necessary licence. The project, which at some earlier point had been envisioned by someone as a Joplin movie, had now become that for certain, partly by default.

Already heavily committed financially, Crawley had no choice but to keep taking fliers. The next stop was the Janis Joplin estate, whose executrix was Janis's mother Dorothy Joplin. He flew to Port Arthur, Texas, where he screened the film for her and her lawyer. Fifty other filmmakers, he learned, had already made approaches and had been turned down, and the day after the singer's death some of them had even registered titles like "Janis Joplin" and "The Janis Joplin Story" with the Motion Picture Producers' Association. At this writing another Joplin film, a fictionalized biography, is said to be in the works but bogged down over disputes about friends of the singer who are still alive.

At first, Crawley says, Dorothy Joplin was uptight. After seeing the film, though, both she and the attorney were moved.

BY DOUG FETHERLING

The mother said: "If you can make a film that's about what Janis meant to her fans and I pass muster on it, go ahead. But if I don't like it..." One would guess this is also the type of self-protective deal she made with Myra Friedman, author of the best Joplin book, *Buried Alive*, in which Mother Joplin is treated very gently. Crawley went ahead on spec. Gamble number three, the big one.

The word went out for other Joplin footage, and Crawley describes the result as having been "a Fellini kind of scene" with lawyers scurrying back and forth across the Atlantic with documents in several languages in an attempt to secure the necessary permissions. The rights were acquired to the Joplin stuff from **Monterey Pop** — and this is the only piece in the 97 minutes of final product previously seen in theatres. (There is also a scene from the Woodstock festival.)

A great source of new material was the press coverage of Janis' 1969 European tour. Film was procured from Bavaria Films in Munich and from other outfits in London, Frankfurt, Paris, Stockholm and elsewhere, not all of it equal in quality or even under normal circumstances usable. For instance, there was some fine audio stuff from Swedish state radio and some nice video from someplace else which was only recorded in mono. KQED, the San Francisco educational station, turned up her first television appearance, and Crawley got releases for both of her Dick Cavett interviews.

In brief, the film came from many sources, some obscure, and there were several near-misses. A member of the late Big Brother group claimed to have some 8mm stuff of Janis taken at a tattoo party, but a later ransacking of his San Francisco apartment failed to produce it.

In the end the original Festival Express footage still comprised over 20 per cent of the film. Despite this and the Canadianness of the whole behind-the-scenes production, the government-sponsored Canadian Film Development Corporation dragged its feet when approached to make its usual arrangements. At length the CFDC did offer to put in $80,000 but this was too little too late. At one time the Joplin estate talked of helping capitalize the project but this never materialized. So it was Crawley who financed it with bank loans that at one stage meant he was paying $8,000 a month interest, which in Toronto represents a number of big movie loans indeed.

Much of the capital went toward rights and permissions. Crawley had Janis performing 18 of her songs on film and each had to be cleared individually and painstakingly. As the singer didn't write much of her own material, there wasn't much the estate could help expedite. On the other songs the costs varied considerably. While most cost far less, the copyright clearances on "Summertime" (held by the Gershwin brothers) and "Me and Bobby McGee" (held by Kris Kristofferson) came to $5,000 each. The total was something upwards of $175,000 including the rights to show the performances, which required a great deal of detective work. Written into the budget are out-of-court settlements in the event of action by (for instance) a girl shown climbing a West German stage and dancing with Janis. All efforts to identify her and secure her permission beforehand were unsuccessful.

To edit the film into an acceptable whole, Crawley hired and moved from the States to Ottawa Howard Alk, the former Pennebaker cameraman who directed **The Murder of Fred Hampton** and co-directed **Eat That Document**, an ABC special on Dylan and The Band. His role was really more than that of an editor; more like that of a post-mortem director or perhaps orchestrator. His work was not only artistically good but, more vitally important in the production sense, good in the eyes of Mrs. Joplin. Crawley showed her a rough cut one year after their initial talk and she approved. Another gamble won.

Janis contains no mention of the singer's death and nothing of her personal life except what is directly connected with her music. There are no references to dope or sex. There is some pretty rough language, but oddly Mrs. Joplin didn't object. Quite the opposite. In Canada the film is rated the equivalent of PG. But in the US it's R because of the word fuck, which Dorothy Joplin refused to cut.

Editor Alk faced some good-sized problems in preparing a feature documentary of the type needed from a shelf-full of film cans, and his solutions are entirely unobtrusive in the finished movie. For example, there was no film available of Janis doing her best known song "Me and Bobby McGee" except one bad performance when she was drunk on the train. So Alk ended the pastiche abruptly and used an audio of the song with acoustic guitar over a montage of her face. The suddenness of it seems to remind the audience of the suddenness of her death, and the lyrics of the song sum up a great deal of what we know of her personality. To balance this, he repeated the tactic at the beginning. Here he used her "Mercedes Benz" with stills of Janis and her famous kandy-kolored car, and others of the vehicle (owned by Grossman) sitting untended in a garage — another subtle statement on her demise.

But Alk's real challenge was to show, without offending the Joplin estate, how singing the blues was as natural an activity to Janis as burgling was for Richard Nixon. The result is that the film is not, like the Hendrix film, an autopsy laced with interviews with acquaintances and admirers and with scenes from the subject's years of anonymity; for one thing, in **Janis** the singer is performing 90 per cent of the time. Rather, it's a film specifically about the ontology of her songs and their roots in her past. In this, the movie is quite successful, and it will be interesting to see how the Joplin biopic, if it actually gets made and released, will treat the same material. My guess is, not as well.

Joplin's importance is that pervading everything she sang was the feeling that she meant it, and meaning the blues is the opposite of being cool. When she sang, she sweated and got red in the face and sounded completely autobiographical. Neither was she into flash (her tackiness was too authentic and she herself too mortal) or flash's predecessor, old fashioned show biz glamour. She tells an interviewer in the film: "I'm not wearing cardboard eyelashes and wearing girdles and playing in Las Vegas."

She was an habitual loser who became famous for that without trying, but merely by attempting to get it out of her system. This comes through in all the **Janis** music and at several points in the interviews and informal conversation. Once it happens in an aside when she recalls having been a waitress in a bowling alley back in Texas ("two Schlitz and an order of french fries"). Another time it arises is in the Cavett sequence.

In the end the only Cavett material used was a clip of her performance on the show and her subsequent interview alone with him, when she tells of her plans to attend her high school class tenth reunion for the purpose of rubbing her classmates' noses in the memory of the shabby way they treated her. Following this are shots of the actual reunion in which she's interviewed by the Port Arthur media while her kid sister, still stuck there, looks on. It's more sad than bitter, like the story of her life and like this whole film.

In a number of sequences — the one with Cavett and others where she's on stage — she talks more than sings, often with a smart-ass alternate culture inarticulateness, which is very phony. Alk seems to have included these to teach us how to see through them to the underlying despair she often sought to bury when not singing. Janis Joplin — like most everyone else — was best when least phony, and **Janis** is the same way. But it's doubly good because it's very seldom false.

So Crawley is finally set to roll, overcoming the usual last minute complications. After selling the package to Universal he has bought back the rights for Canada where he will distribute it himself. He has won the biggest private gamble in English Canadian film history and at last arrived at the point where he can proudly quote the words of Janis in the movie about having got all the shit together. The whole experience has made a devout Joplin fan of one who before would have seemed an unlikely admirer indeed. It should be said that, to his credit, Crawley is putting some of the profits into another, more Canadian feature, an adaptation of **The Strange One** by domestic nature-writer Fred Bodsworth.

Doug Fetherling, a Toronto poet and writer, conducts a movie column in Canadian Forum. *He is working on a book about Ben Hecht.*

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STAVISKY...

La recherche des images perdues

Stavisky... Jean-Paul Belmondo and Charles Boyer, elegant thirties decors and soft-focus, lyrical photography, the story of a romantic and mysterious swindler whose own downfall in 1933-34 brought down a government and resulted in riots in the streets, eloquently muted color photography and equally subtle and haunting music by Stephen Sondheim (his first film score) — the first impression one forms of Alain Resnais' first film in six years is that it must be something of a commercial cop-out: a product designed to capitalize on whatever romantic fantasies happen to be current in the middle of the effete seventies. And there is some objective truth to that impression. Not that Resnais planned it that way, not at all. But after six years during which he worked, he says, harder on projects which never got to the shooting stage than he had on any of the films he had *completed* during the early sixties, there were certain economic laws in operation which Resnais just couldn't avoid. He had spent five years trying without success to raise funds for several ambitious projects — **Deliverez Nous de Bien** by Richard Seaver, a film about the Marquis de Sade; the legendary Stan Lee project; a documentary on the life of H. P. Lovecraft which William Friedkin was to produce; a script by Penelope Mortimer — each had failed to raise enough interest among producers and it was only when Resnais was able to present financiers with the package of the romantic story of Stavisky with Belmondo as star that he was able to raise sufficient cash to get back behind the camera again.

But the romantic commerciality of **Stavisky...** is only emulsion deep. Like most of Resnais' previous films, this one is subtly deceptive. Luckily for Resnais, this time however, the superficial first impressions the film generates will accrue to his advantage at the box office. But the film succeeds on many levels and re-viewings reveal dimensions that are not at all obvious at first.

First, **Stavisky...** succeeds magnificently (as I've already suggested) as commodity: as a romantic evocation of the lost worlds of the twenties and thirties, entre deux guerres, it clearly out-Gatsbies **Gatsby**: the cars, the clothes, the colors, the rhythms, the music and moods all powerfully satisfy our voracious appetite for *la nostalgie art-deco*. In fact, Resnais has given us (what we hope will be) the last word on the subject. (Belmondo had started the thirties nostalgia cycle with **Borsalino** four years ago).

But the parallel with **Gatsby** extends deeper than their evident values as commodities in the film marketplace, for Semprun's script manages to catch some of the same mythic power which has made the novel a masterpiece (and which entirely eluded Jack Clayton's film). Stavisky, like his American cousin, is one of the last tycoons, the last of the grand self-made capitalist princes, building quite liveable castles in the air. But whereas **Gatsby** is only a vague homage to the old dream, **Stavisky...** gives us quite a precise analysis of its structure. Jorge Semprun's Alexandre Stavisky is acutely conscious of the ephemeral nature of his wealth and the basic fact that fortunes like his are made mainly out of lies and dreams. It is not necessary to produce real wealth; it is only necessary to convince other people that you have the *touch*. Stavisky runs through 22 million francs in two years, nearly all of it credits, *un*real money: he understands the fictional nature of cash and the real power of style and image. Like Gatsby he makes an art of his life; unlike Gatsby he's consciously professional at that art.

Like Fitzgerald's novel, Semprun and Resnais' film also gives a central position to its hero's *amour fou* — Daisy in the first

case, Alexandre's wife Arlette (Annie Duperey) in the second. Romances after all very often have to do with love and sex and both Daisy and Arlette are human metaphors for the real subject of these classic and apocalyptic stories: the mad love their heroes have for money, money, money and for the style and power that they associate with it. Scrooge McDuck wallowing in his vault might be a more accurate emblem for our collective greed, but there's hardly a romance there and what makes Resnais' film and Fitzgerald's novels classics is this simple structural trick they have of paralleling their heroes' sexual ardor with their equally obsessive adoration of cold hard cash. The process is reversed as we watch or read: our subconscious libidinous longing for money and the power and style which represent it is translated into more acceptable sexual and romantic feelings for the people of the story.

If **Stavisky...** stopped here it would still be a fairly intriguing film, especially since it succeeds so well where the film version of **Gatsby** failed. But since it is a Resnais film, there are a lot of other dimensions to it. In his previous films Resnais had always shown a fascination with the structure of narrative, from the involuted complexity of **Muriel** and the existential mystery of **Marienbad** to the relatively simple "flash-forwards" of **La Guerre est finie** and the rhythmical, exciting dissection of the time line in **Je T'aime**. In each of those films, the narrative point of view was determined by the central character: we saw **La Guerre est finie** the way Diego saw it, for example. But in **Stavisky...** Resnais has complicated matters somewhat by showing us Alexandre Stavisky from a much more intricate point of view. This is a film about the legend, not the man, he explains, so he wanted a pulp fiction view of it because that is the way he had seen it as a kid. For the first time his *own* memories become part of the structure of a Resnais film; it is a logical advance for him. He consciously strove for a kind of cinematic archaism that he hoped would reproduce (and comment upon) the particular media stage (popular journalism) on which the real Stavisky had acted out his legend. This concern began early. Semprun and Resnais had originally conceived of the film as more documentary. "But little by little," Resnais explains, "the character *invaded* the film," until his mad love for his wife and his anxiety about his own death took control. During the shooting, photographer Sacha Vierny worked for the qualities of color that Resnais remembered from old bicolor prints of the thirties. Sondheim's music also does much to recreate, not so much the atmosphere, but the esthetic style of the period — as we now remember it.

The result of all this is a very rich film, full of effective detail, but also strangely enough a film that is at first somewhat inaccessible. In one way or another this has been true of all of Resnais' films: they require repeated viewings before they yield up the intricate secrets of their structure. **Stavisky...**, at least, will have some immediate popular success simply on the basis of its gorgeous surface. But a real understanding of Resnais' accomplishment will depend on the precarious balance that eventually should emerge between the various dimensions of the film: the lush nostalgia commodity value, the importance of the myth of Stavisky, and — probably most important — Resnais' implicit and not quickly assimilated essay on cinematic and musical styles of the period and their urgent but only vaguely understood connection with that myth and that commodity.

James Monaco

Stavisky...
An Ariane Films/Cerito Films (France)/Euro International (Italy) co-production. Director: Alain Resnais. Executive Producers: Alexandre Mnouchkine and Georges Dancigers. Screenplay: Jorge Semprun. Photography: Sacha Vierny. Editor: Albert Jurgenson. Sound: Jean-Pierre Ruh and Bernard Bats. Music: Stephen Sondheim. Set Design: Jacques Saulnier. Cast: Jean-Paul Belmondo, Anny Duperey, Charles Boyer, François Perier, Roberto Bisaco, Michel Lonsdale, Claude Rich. Colour. 117 mins.

Bring Me the Head of Alfredo Garcia
A United Artists release of an Optimus Productions-Estudios Churubusco co-production. Director: Sam Peckinpah. Producers: Martin Baum and Helmut Dantine. Screenplay: Gordon Dawson and Peckinpah, from an original story by Frank Kowalski and Peckinpah. Supervising Editor: Garth Craven. Photography: Alex Phillips Jr. Music: Jerry Fielding. Cast: Warren Oates, Isela Vega, Gig Young, Robert Webber, Helmut Dantine, Emilio Fernandez, Kris Kristofferson, Janine Maldonado, Donny Fitts. Colour. 112 mins.

The Bench of Desolation
A Scott Free Enterprises (London) release of an ORTF, Cosmovision, Technisonor Production. Director: Claude Chabrol. Producer: Philippe Baraduc. Screenplay: Roger Grenier, based on the Henry James short story. Photography: Jean Rabier. Art Director: Guy Littaye. Editor: Jacques Gaillard. Cast: Michel Duchaussoy, Catherine Samie, Thalie Fruges, Michel Piccoli. Eastmancolour. 52 mins.

Woman of the Ganges
A Monument Films release of an O.R.T.F. production. Director and Screenplay: Marguerite Duras. Music: Carlos D'Aslessio. Cast: Catherine Sellers, Dionyse Mascoli, Nicole Hiss, Gérard Depardieu, Françoise Lebrun. Colour. 90 mins.

Antonia: A Portrait of the Woman
A Phoenix Films release of a Rocky Mountains Productions film. Directors: Judy Collins and Jill Godmilow. Producer: Judy Collins. Photography: Coulter Watt. Editor: Jill Godmilow. 58 mins.

Sam Peckinpah's

BRING ME THE HEAD OF ALFREDO GARCIA

All these women

It is unlikely that you would go to see Sam Peckinpah's **Bring Me the Head of Alfredo Garcia** expecting to find a love story whose action depends upon its women for impetus. More likely, you would expect either a tale of violence and gore or — considering the adverse critical response the film has received — you wouldn't go at all. Nevertheless, **Alfredo Garcia** is a love story first and a tale of violence second. And despite what you may have heard, it is the women in the film who precipitate the action.

In its opening moments, the film appears to have been set in the late nineteenth century somewhere south of the border. A pregnant daughter defies her wealthy and powerful father, El Jefe (Emilio Fernandez, who played General Mapache in Peckinpah's classic **The Wild Bunch**), by refusing to name the man who dishonored her until her arm is broken by his henchmen. Her defiance triggers her father's wrath as he places a million dollar reward on the head of the man she names: Alfredo Garcia. It is only then that we realize that we are in the twentieth century as El Jefe's gunmen exit on their manhunt, racing from the courtyard of his hacienda in expensive contemporary cars. Like the soldiers who turn out to be outlaws at the opening of **The Wild Bunch**, or the herd of deer serenely grazing in what turns out to be the maximum security compound of a Texas prison in the opening shots of **The Getaway**, **Alfredo Garcia** begins with the conflict between appearance and reality.

The bulk of the film takes place in modern Mexico where among those enlisted in the search is a ne'er-do-well American expatriate named Bennie (Warren Oates showing an extraordinary range of emotions in a demanding role). By what appears to be good fortune, Bennie's Mexican mistress, Elita (Isela Vega), had been the mistress of Alfredo as well and she tells Bennie that Alfredo has recently died in an auto crash. Seeing this as his opportunity to escape his tawdry life style, Bennie bets his life against being able to provide the syndicado with Alfredo's head.

In what follows, Peckinpah creates a disturbingly painful film. However, its pain arises not from the blood-letting but from the sudden destruction of happiness. For Peckinpah, love between a man and a women is a dangerous experience because it demands totally selfless commitment to another and with that commitment comes vulnerability. We watch the growth of the love between Bennie and Elita. He is totally unprepared for her eventual death and it leaves him on the fringes of insanity, for he is helpless to alter what has happened. Denied her love, Bennie wreaks havoc on those responsible — both directly and indirectly — for her death.

By placing love and violence in such a radical juxtaposition, Peckinpah has created a romantic quest which combines several classical mythologies. Bennie is both Jason in search of a "golden fleece" and Perseus brandishing the Gorgon's head. He is a pure knight on a holy quest, the champion of a savaged lady out to lay her soul to rest. He dresses in white and rises from the dead, invincible to all until he himself breaks the spell by going back for the million dollars he had at first left behind.

If Bennie is a mythical knight, Elita as his lady redeems her purity through the same mutual love that gives him strength. If she earns her living as a

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James Monaco is a frequent Take One *contributor who also teaches film and drama at New York's New School for Social Research. He has also written for* The New York Times *and is at work on a book about The New Wave for Oxford University Press.*

prostitute, it is an occupation which has an earthy honesty about it that obviously attracts Peckinpah, for she shares that line of work with some of his strongest heroines (most notably Hildy of **The Ballad of Cable Hogue**). And she may be readily contrasted with the weak and selfish Amy of Peckinpah's **Straw Dogs**.

Without question, Peckinpah has made the women in this tale the initiators of every major movement in the film. It is El Jefe's daughter whose pregnancy and defiance cause her father to demand Garcia's head in the first place. It is Elita's love and the loss of that love which gives Bennie the strength to do things he never thought possible of himself. And it is Alfredo's grandmother whose persistence leads to the massacre of her entire family.

Throughout the film, Peckinpah makes it clear that all of these women — and Elita in particular — are stronger than the men who attempt to dominate them and equal to the men who love them. Fittingly, as Bennie and El Jefe confront each other near the end of the film, it is El Jefe's daughter who commands Bennie: "Kill him!" Although they are often overlooked by Peckinpah's friends and enemies alike, these women are not strangers to Peckinpah's world. He has directed six films in less than five years and four of them, including **Alfredo Garcia**, contain portrayals of strong, complex women: Hildy in **Cable Hogue**, Elvira Bonner in **Junior Bonner** and Carol McCoy in **The Getaway**.

In recent years, it has become fashionable to condemn the films of Sam Peckinpah as being "fascist" or reflecting an overbearing "machismo" attitude towards life in general and women in particular. With **Alfredo Garcia** he both acknowledges and refutes those charges. Combining the haunting images of director of photography Alex Phillips Jr. and the subtle, lyrical scoring of Jerry Fielding (to mention only two of many outstanding contributions), **Bring Me the Head of Alfredo Garcia** is one of Peckinpah's most important and personal works.

Garner Simmons

Claude Chabrol's

THE BENCH OF DESOLATION

Implosions externalized

At first glance Henry James' "Bench Of Desolation" seems an odd choice of subject matter for a Claude Chabrol film. A rather low-keyed short story pivoting around a fastidious rare-book shop owner, "Bench Of Desolation" is a far cry from such recent Chabrol oeuvres as **Wedding in Blood** and **Nada**. Nevertheless, **Bench of Desolation** is the finest short film I've seen in years, and I suspect that its success, like that of Chabrol's "Hitchcockian" works, is directly related to an aesthetic tension — in this case the tension between the auteur's sensibility and the author's craft.

> "I am sad and unhappy about what happened. The less said the better. Bob has worked with me twice before. He is a very intelligent man. But I tell you, if I ever felt I needed a drink so badly that I couldn't go without it, I would stop drinking. I wish he could feel this way.
>
> — Otto Preminger (in *Variety*), explaining why Robert Mitchum is no longer starring in his latest feature, **Rosebud**"

Strangely enough, many of the Nouvelle Vague directors are as fascinated by the writings of Henry James as they are intrigued by the cult of Hollywood. Truffaut, for instance, has claimed James as his favorite author, although Truffaut's films are about as congruent with a Jamesian sensibility as with that of John Ford or, for that matter, Jerry Lewis. Chabrol, on the other hand, has always been fascinated with the darker aspects of complacency (most often bourgeois complacency) and the ambivalences of apparent good versus evil; thus his sympathy with James is as natural as his intuitive empathy for Lang.

Both James and Chabrol are concerned with the idiosyncrasies of the particular, and the descrepancies in their thematic preoccupations are reflected more in style than in substance. While the former tends to implode and distill, the latter is inclined to dazzle and externalize. In **Bench of Desolation**, we are treated to the best of both worlds.

The story is a simple one: a priggish Herbert Dodd (Michel Duchaussoy) is confronted with an impossible ultimatum. He must either marry an ex-fiancé he has learned to despise or pay the tenacious woman four hundred pounds, which he cannot possibly obtain. Kate Cookham (Catherine Samie) is as determined as she is unappealing, insisting that if she does not receive her ring or her compensation, she will air Dodd's dirty linen in court. More niggardly with his reputation than with his possessions, Dodd sacrifices his beloved book store and ultimately the lives of the girl he marries and their child to the whims of a woman's convoluted passion. In the end, Kate returns the money with interest, possessing her victim-love as completely with her goodness as she had with her avarice.

This is, of course, an abridgement of a much more complex tale. As Chabrol portrays it, Herbert Dodd spends a good deal of time on his bench of desolation looking vacuously and self-pityingly at sunsets or out to sea, while two women move frenetically around him. As the film progresses, an *Ethan Frome*-like reversal of roles takes place. Dodd's passivity feeding the patient obsession of the erstwhile rejected fiancé while it kills Nan Drury (Thalie Fruges), his fragile and once-beautiful wife.

Bench of Desolation is fraught with habitual Chabrolean ironies. It is significant, for instance, that Dodd's wife and child die from mental rather than physical privation and that this minor tragedy could, in reality, have easily been averted: it is inevitable only on a psychic level. Even on her death bed the much-abused Nan continues to protest, "If only you'd gone to a lawyer!"; and Kate freely admits (albeit *post factum*) that she would not have stood a chance before the law. What Kate had relied on, of course, was an unrelenting conviction in her passion, a passion every bit as viscid as that of the cuckolded husband in **La Femme Infidèle** or the psychotic murderer in **Le Boucher**.

While Chabrol's camera angles are uncharacteristically subdued in **Bench of Desolation**, his *mise en scène* is all the more powerful for its restraint. In one sequence, for instance, Dodd sits in a restaurant, conversing with a prototypical Chabrolean buffoon about money matters: at this point, quite literally, matters of life and death. While Dodd speaks, the camera rests easily over three tables, encompassing a totally unrelated world of desultory events. With apparent nonchalance this unparalleled craftsman thus manages to underscore both the world's indifference to Dodd's dilemma and the microcosmic pathos of such quiet (if unnecessary and banal) bourgeois desperation.

The sensibilities of James and Chabrol coalesce most beautifully at the end of the film when Dodd is once again seated on his bench of desolation — this time with a transformed Kate. In deference to James, Chabrol has eschewed his habitual outward manifestations of passion — the *deus ex machina* violence that arises in all his other works to finish off plot, theme, and usually at least one major character as well. Nonetheless, when we watch the camera pull back to reveal Kate's body entangling Dodd, we are aware that she has killed Nan as surely as any Chabrol lover ever killed his or her rival. More important, in accepting Kate's succor, the apparently victimized Dodd has become a posthumous collaborator in his wife's death, the recipient in Chabrol's habitual transfer of guilt.

Double-edged ironies such as these are James' as well as Chabrol's, but it is the director's cinematic vision which renders this fifty-two minute feature both viscerally pleasing and one of the most provocative films shown at this year's New York Film Festival.

Diane Jacobs

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Marguerite Duras'

WOMAN OF THE GANGES

Filling in the blanks

Woman of the Ganges, a film written and directed by Marguerite Duras, is a deliberate journey through a self-endowed world, in which cinema itself, as a means of expression, is alternately questioned, denied, and finally affirmed.

"This is a film of images and sounds", a voice tells us, in a Godardian preface accompanied by black leader. The voices and images we are about to hear and see are two rather than one. The characters on-screen are not the voices heard off-screen; there is no bond between the two sets of people, other than the soundtrack's attempt to "explain" the visuals.

It is explanation itself which functions as the principal theme of **Woman of the Ganges**. The plot is ostensibly concerned with a group of people who have returned to a scene from their past. Entering into this void, they try to re-establish the relationships which had originally failed. What the film presents us with, however, is a series of "plot elements", as it attempts to re-create the past through the characters' present.

In novels such as *Hiroshima Mon Amour* and *L'Amante Anglaise*, Duras was concerned with the instabilities of the present tense as a descriptive element. Any substance that is recorded — whether on paper, tape, film, any media will do — automatically enters the domain of the past. We cannot describe an act as it is going on. It has already happened. *L'Amante Anglaise* reconstructs a crime through the use of language in a purely reflective sense — the assimilated facts are based entirely on taped conversations. Upon the completion of this meticulous process of reconstruction, the act under observation still remains distanced from the viewer. Language may only approximate it. In the end, the sum of the investigation resembles a snowflake — complete in itself yet vulnerable to disintegration upon the slightest inspection.

This mode of fragile reconstruction applies also to film and is present in **Women of the Ganges**. Duras builds images of painful simplicity, which resemble paintings set into motion — but not emotionalized — in the far regions of the frame. Characters, in trying to re-create or re-evaluate the past, emerge as still-life objects. In this environment, object and subject merge into non-defined structures; the sea, the corridors, and the people become one. Time cannot be re-created from without or within. It simply exists, beyond the comprehension of the narrator or the subjects. Description is essentially futile as it is an attempt to limit and close off the space that surrounds us. The characters in Duras' world choose to remain in the past. By doing so, they become members of the living dead — physically alive, but environmentally non-descript.

For its characters, the space of **Woman of the Ganges** is a utopian wasteland. It is a feeling more than an area, which Duras illuminates through a negation of cinema as a formal property. The camera does not move once in the entire film, not even sequentially, as from a long shot to a medium or close shot. A space is put upon the screen and is then entered and abandoned by one or more of the characters. They exit into an off-screen space which, like time, simply exists before it can be defined.

In this decidedly static atmosphere, the characters movement is slow and deliberate. No one runs. No one yells. They are presented to us on the same plane as the revolving door, which leads into and out of the hotel standing at the center of the (non)narrative. The camera, in attempting to deal directly with time and space, ultimately gives the impression of flattening out the subjects through its gaze, and extending the objects from within by treating them "equally".

The two women who act as narrators — or, to be more exact, "commentators" — also defy our attempts to define them in concrete terms. The voice of the woman who attempts to answer the probing questions of her partner about herself and the characters on-screen is supplied by Françoise Lebrun. Although she does communicate a wispy naiveté and child-like sense of wonder, she still remains distanced from the listener. (In the sixties, I would have said alienated.) The answer she relies on the most is "Yes", which becomes a blind affirmation of an alien world. "Will you kill me?" "Yes."

Woman of the Ganges is a fascinating achievement whose success ultimately lies in the mind of the viewer — a mind which must be cleared of nodding affirmations or denials. In *Pour Un Nouveau Roman*, Robbe-Grillet talks of the artist's need for the reader's co-operation — one which would be active, conscious, and creative. The reader must "invent" the work and the world in which it is situated. Duras extends this plea to the cinema. In this context, the long take may be seen as providing a period of reaction for the viewer rather than the actor. By taking apart the film she provides the tools the viewer needs to rebuild it. Bazin talked of deep focus as a means of drawing the viewer into the space on the screen in order to facilitate his "decision". With Duras and **Woman of the Ganges**, there is no choice. The space is deep but the action is shallow. The viewer must fill in the blanks. We occupy the off-screen space.

Michael Tarantino

> "Anna Karina, discussing her experience being directed by Joseph Strick in **Justine**.
>
> I did a shot with him in Tunis. ... It was four o'clock in the morning, and he was asleep. I realize that it was four o'clock in the morning, but he was the director and he was asleep. I mean, what's all this shit about? It just gives you a funny feeling to do a scene in front of somebody who's asleep in the chair.
>
> *Interview* magazine"

Collins-Godmilow's

ANTONIA

Close-up of courage

After seeing **Antonia: A Portrait of the Woman**, a gentle and thoughtful film biography of Dr. Antonia Brico, I was reminded of Joan Mellen's strangely damning remarks — in her otherwise incisive *Women and their Sexuality in the New Film* — regarding feminist documentaries. By 1973, when *Women* was published, the non-fiction feminist film had (in Mellen's words) "yet to become part of the art of film" and the author suggested that women who had been concentrating (wasting?) their energies on the documentary turn instead to fiction, where "perhaps we will see a more serious image of liberated woman emerge on the screen." In short, Mellen seemed to dismiss the feminist documentary as a form that might transcend its social utilitarianism, as if it were a political corset fit only to reshape an occasionally sagging feminist consciousness. Now, only a year after the book's publication, several fine feminist documentaries have surfaced (among them, Mirra Bank's **Yudie** and Martha Coolidge's **An Old Fashioned Woman**, both shown at the New York Film Festival), dispelling Mellen's queer but clear implication that filmic form — rather than the sensibilities applied to it — yields artistic destiny. **Antonia: A Portrait of the Woman** is just such a film.

Co-directed by folksinger Judy Collins and filmmaker Jill Godmilow, the hour-long documentary pays tribute to America's first female conductor. Collins and Godmilow reject the troublesome tones that have plagued so many earlier feminist documents: childlike reverence, tearful commiseration, encounter-group sensationalism. **Antonia** is, in the very best sense of the word, an Adult film: its tone is one of loving respect for a woman whose intelligence, talent, accomplishment, and courage command nothing less.

Antonia begins appropriately with Dr. Brico's professional debut in 1930. Then 28 years old, she was the first woman to conduct the Berlin Philharmonic. And

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although Brico's notices for the performance (part of which you see on an old newsreel) applaud her, they do it sitting down. "Girl Genius," one headline declares; "Cinderella" another calls her — as if her triumph resulted from the wave of a magic wand, rather than from supreme talent and unfailing dedication. Several years after her debut, Dr. Brico founded and conducted a women's symphony orchestra, again with great success, but when she felt the time had come to include men in the orchestra, she couldn't sell the idea. After conducting twice at the Metropolitan Opera House, she was refused a third concert: John Charles Thomas, the baritone scheduled to sing, would not appear with a woman conductor for fear he might be upstaged. Years of inactivity followed, interrupted in 1946 by a grand tour including concerts in London, Finland, and Brico's native Holland. Now, at the age of 73, Antonia Brico lives and teaches in Denver (Judy Collins is a former student) and only occasionally — 4 or 5 times a year — conducts. Yet this is a woman who possesses the energy to perform 4 or 5 times a month.

Brico's living-room, filled to the brim with pianos, flowers, students, and photographs of former colleagues, serves as the film's headquarters. There Brico reminisces about her childhood, a generally unhappy time when the piano became her greatest ally. She talks about her associations with other artists, such as Arthur Rubenstein, and once, briefly, admits her frustration and "perpetual heartache" at not being able to play her instrument, the orchestra, as often as she feels she must.

You watch Brico teaching — a woman oblivious to the presence of the camera in the presence of music. And a graceful sequence of cross-cuts between a piano recital, with Brico conducting, and rehearsals of the same piano concerto in her living-room captures the sense of creative continuity vital to an artist's life. Still later, with quiet intensity, Brico describes the separation pains a conductor suffers at a concert's end and the ephemeral nature of her art becomes terribly vivid. A violinist can pick up a violin and play to his heart's content; a writer can always sit down and write; but a conductor must rely on the fusion of hundreds of elements to create: upon musicians, the audience, the availability of a hall in which to perform, and the cold hard cash to pay for it all.

Brico is on camera during most of the film, except for a few moments devoted to clippings, photographs, faded telegrams — and to a puzzling animated sequence. Vaguely inspired by an event in Brico's career, this parenthetical segment announces itself as "A film maker's fantasy of an event that never took place" and conjures up a timpani competition between a tall, buxom babe very much in control of the situation and a bloated, frantic male competitor. Of course, the segment is played for laughs, but its rib-poking humor is foreign to the character of the film and finally encroaches on precious time that might have been spent with the portrait's subject.

As Brico tells of hours spent with Albert Schweitzer and presents his huge photograph for the camera to fathom, the faces of Brico and Schweitzer dominate the screen — faces so strong and blunt they might have been carved in Rushmore. Watching Brico's unabashed joy in sharing the photograph, you begin to appreciate Dr. Schweitzer's good fortune to have known her.

A more serious image of the liberated woman emerging on the screen? Not likely. Dr. Brico's professional life has been fraught with disappointment and insult, tied directly to the simple fact of her sex, but her courage, commitment, and love of music cannot be contained. **Antonia: A Portrait of the Woman**, in telling Dr. Brico's story and exposing her strength, reinforces at least one unavoidable truth: that the liberation of women depends as much upon women's capacities to nurture their inner resources as it does upon social reform.

Catherine Plumb

Catherine Plumb is a free-lance writer in New York City.

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A 16 mm Booker's Guide to Sources of Films Mentioned in this Issue.

All. US:NYF.
The American Soldier. US.NYF.
Antonia. Can:NCE US:PHX.
At Play with the Angels (There's Always Vanilla; The Affair). US:CAM.
The Ballad of Cable Hogue. WB, SWK.
Bench of Desolation. SFE.
The Bitter Tears of Petra Von Kant. US.NYF.
Borsalino. Can:PAR. US:FI.
Le Boucher. Can:IFD. US:SWK.
Bring Me the Head of Alfredo Garcia. UA*
Carnal Knowledge. Can: BEL. US:FI.
The Crazies (Code Name Trixie). Can:CPX. US:CAM.
Cry of the City. US:FI.
The Dark Mirror. Can:AST.
Ernest Hemingway's The Killers (Siegel). Can:UNI.
Ernest Hemingway's The Killers (Siodmak). Can:UNI.
La Femme Infidèle. Can:FEM.
The Getaway. Can:WB. US:SWK.
The Great Gatsby. Can:PAR. US:FI.
La Guerre est Finie. Can:MMP. US:MAB.
High Sierra. Can:WB. US:CMH.
Je T'Aime. Can.FM*
Junior Bonner. Can:IFD.
Lady Windermere's Fan. MAB.
Lancelot du Lac. US:PHX.
Last Year at Marienbad. Can:AST. US:MAB.
Little Caesar. Can:WB. US:MAB.
Love is Colder than Death. US:NYF.
The Merchant of the Four Seasons. US:NYF.
Monterey Pop. Can:CRA. US:CCC.
The Murder of Fred Hampton. VTN.
Muriel. UA.
Nada. NLC.
The Night of the Living Dead. Can:MMP. US:WR.
Phantom Lady. UNI.
The Roaring Twenties. Can:WB. US:CMH.
Spiral Staircase. Can:KEN. US:TWF.
Straw Dogs. Can:IFD. US:FI.
The Thirty-Nine Steps. Can:AST. US:WR.
Underworld. Can:CFI. US:MMA.
Warning for a Holy Whore. US:NYF.
Wedding in Blood. US:NLC.
The Wild Bunch. WB.
Whity. US:NYF.
Why Did Herr R. Run Amuck? US:NYF.
Woman of the Ganges. MON.

* 16mm prints may not be available currently. While based on sources we believe reliable and up-to-date, *Take One* cannot guarantee the accuracy of any of the above information, nor assume any liability for the results of any misinformation given. We will be happy to print additions and corrections in future issues.

AST. Astral Films, 224 Davenport Rd., Toronto M5R 1J7
BEL. BelleVue Film Distributors, 227 Victoria Street, Toronto 2, Ont.
CAM. Cambist Films Inc., 850 Seventh Ave., New York, N.Y. 10019
CCC. Canyon Cinema Cooperative, Room 220, Industrial Center Bldg., Sausalito, Cal. 94965.
CFI. Canadian Film Institute, 1762 Carling Ave., Ottawa 13, Ont.
CMH. Contemporary Films/McGraw Hill, Princeton Road, Hightstown, N.J. 08520
CPX. Cinepix, 8275 Mayrand, Montreal.
CRA. Crawley Films Ltd., 409 King St. West, Toronto
FEM. Le Service Cultural de l'Ambassade de France, 464 Wilbrod St., Ottawa
FI. Films Inc., 1144 Wilmette Ave., Wilmette, Ill. 60091
FM. Films Mutuels, 225 Roy St., E., Montreal
IFD. International Film Distributors, 20 Bloor St., W., Toronto 5, Ont.
KEN. Ken Films, 555 Mt. Pleasant Rd., Toronto
MAB. MacMillan Audio Brandon, 34 MacQuesten Parkway S., Mount Vernon, N.Y. 10550
MMA. Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53rd Street, New York, N.Y. 10019.
MMP. Martin Motion Pictures, 47 Lakeshore Road E., Port Credit, Ont.
MON. Monument Films, 43 West 16 St., New York, N.Y. 10011
NCE. New Cinema Enterprises, 35 Britain St., Toronto M5A 1R7
NLC. New Line Cinema. 853 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10003
NYF. New Yorker Films, 43 West 61st St., NYC 10023
PAR. Paramount Pictures, Toronto Star Building, 1 Yonge St., Toronto, Ont.
PHX. Phoenix Films, 470 Park Ave. South, New York, N.Y.
SFE. Scott Free Enterprises Ltd., 6-10 Lexington St., London W.1, England
SWK. Swank Motion Pictures, 201 South Jefferson Ave., St. Louis, Mo. 63166
TWF. Trans-World Films Inc., 332 South Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill. 60604
UA. United Artists Corp., Suite 800, 2180 Yonge St., Toronto, Ont. and 729 7th Ave., NYC 10019
UNI. Universal Films, 2450 Victoria Park Ave., Willowdale, Ont. and 445 Park Ave., NYC 10022
VTN. Video Tape Network, 115 East 62 St., New York, N.Y. 10021
WB. Warner Brothers Distributors, 70 Carlton St., Toronto, Ont. and 400 Warner Blvd., Burbank, Cal. 91505
WR. Walter Reade 16, 241 East 34th St., NYC 10016

16 mm News

A column of information for those among our readers who regularly book 16mm films for classroom, film society, etc. Distributors are invited to send word of new releases, etc. to 16mm News, Take One, Box 1778, Station B, Montreal, Quebec H3B 3L3. We'll print as much of it as we can.

George Ritter Films of Toronto (38 Yorkville Ave., phone 416-964-6926) writes to point out that — with respect to the documentary film, **Velikovsky: The Bonds of the Past** (mentioned in 16mm News last issue) — they have world television and non-theatrical rights. They have also got all rights to a new 27 minute colour film on the young British psychic Matthew Manning.

Insight Exchange (P.O. Box 42584, San Francisco, Calif. 94101; 415-388-9450) has a new brochure listing a number of films and videotapes about women that they distribute. Included are **Well Kept Secrets Revealed**, **Home Born Baby**, Royanne Rosenberg's **Roseland**, and Johanna Demetrakis' **Womanhouse**.

The Learning Corporation of America (711 Fifth Ave., NYC 10022; 212-832-1338) has just released a group of three 16mm colour films, **The Young Filmmakers Series**, showing how young students can make super-8 movies. Each film is 11 minutes long, and there's a 32-page accompanying manual as well.

Mica Releasing Organization (P.O. Box 54484, Civic Center Station, Atlanta, Georgia 30308; 404-237-0471) is a film distributor only recently come to our attention. They have 16mm rights to a number of horror films, three Russ Meyer productions (**Vixen**; **Cherry, Harry & Raquel**; and **Finders Keepers Lovers Weepers**), and several independently-made American features (including **End of August**, **The Last of the American Hoboes**, and the intriguing **Captain Celluloid vs. The Film Pirates** — co-authored by William K. Everson!).

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Killiam Shows Inc. (6 East 39th Street, New York City 10016; 212-679-8230), which specializes in silent film restorations, is for the first time offering many of its classics for rental in the 16mm market. The 36 colour-tinted features with music scores include the best works of Sennett, Valentino, Fairbanks, Keaton, Barrymore and Chaney, as well as several D.W. Griffith classics. Contact Patrick Montgomery for a catalog.

October Films (13 Marie Avenue, Cambridge, Mass. 02139; 617-661-0371) is now renting their film-portrait of Nicholas Ray, **I'm a Stranger Here Myself**. Already successfully presented at the Edinburgh, San Sebastian, and Boston film festivals, the film is a personal, intimate documentary highlighting interviews with Ray and some of his colleagues, admirers and friends (including John Houseman, Natalie Wood and François Truffaut). Howard da Silva narrates.

> "Making a picture is like making a high jump into a swimming pool. You have to breathe. You have to know you go into the water — not onto the stone. But when you jump, you have to abandon yourself."
>
> — Federico Fellini, in *The New York Times*

Columns

Outs

The aesthete of schlock

Continuing our seminar in automatic writing...

I was about to pass along a few names of filmmakers who had received less than enthusiastic support from Pauline Kael, American directors of some independent ambition who have gone on without her blessing. These people, mind, work rather much in the way she was suggesting in this summer's long *New Yorker* piece, "On the Future of Movies", in which she called for a freedom from the sort of commercial obligations and constraints that hobble most movie people working in America.

She has been notably short with, and sometimes absolutely disdainful of, the work of: Bob Rafelson, John Cassavetes, Charles Eastman, Dennis Hopper, Monte Hellman, Terry Mallick, George Lucas (about whose **American Graffiti** she was reserved, almost sulky, like someone who got a last-minute invitation to a party), Stanley Kubrick, Jim McBride. These are talents who could be expected, if not to shatter the mould, than at least to try and reshape it, extend it. Instead, Kael lends her enthusiasm and support, and considerable prestige, to advancing the cause of a congenial commercial taxidermist like Irwin Kershner. She pays strong lip service to advancing the cause of mainstream independence in this country, then denies the talents and efforts of many of the people who do. She is as much apologist as acolyte for Robert Altman, seems on the nose in her enthusiasm for Martin Scorsese and Brian De Palma, although, in fairness, she righteously savaged **Sisters**.

The rest of the people on her list of chosen favorites — excepting Francis Coppola — seem splendidly qualified to reinforce what has always, I think, been Kael's weakness as a critic, her aesthetic of schlock. We are talking, remember, about a writer of great and sometimes irritating gifts, and of excellent intelligence, who came out for **Funny Girl** and **Fiddler on the Roof**, despised **Eight and a Half**, and said only good things, without much enthusiasm or any of the expected perceptions, about **Persona**. Her writing can be wonderfully detailed, but she seems to have no real attraction to depth in film. Almost any sort of stylistic or thematic ambition she sees as pretention, except, perhaps, where she ought to (as in her **Last Tango in Paris** review). She seems most comfortable with, and most adept at analyzing, American popular filmmaking, especially entertainments, but there is much outside of this she shouldn't be trusted with.

Putting down Pauline Kael, for a lot of critics and reviewers, is like giving Mom a good sharp Freudian boot in the ass. I'm freer to do it than many because I was never much of a disciple. I liked reading her in *Film Quarterly*. She was feisty then, exhiliratingly acerbic and perceptive even when I felt she was wrong-headed, as in her put-downs of Fellini and Antonioni. She's best playing devil's advocate; maybe that's it. I have the feeling, in her most recent writing, that the role of influential partisan does not fit her quite so well. In her earlier days, she would have torn to bits — and rightly — any critic who would swear undying loyalty to an artist out of a sense and fear of the precarious commercial situation the artist worked in: thus, **Up the Sandbox** gets a good review because Kershner may suffer commercial damnation otherwise.

Any critic can only grade on good intentions up to a certain point, or hedge on a new film that is poor to invest in a future one that may be good. Almost all filmmakers want automatically to be liked and respected for what they try to do. Their attitude is, "It's hard enough to get anything on that's the slightest bit different, don't I even get points for trying?" It's almost as if they're asking for citations for bravery in the face of the enemy, and in some small way they're right. But Kael lets it carry too far. She invests too much, too freely, and often in pretty shaky stock.

Kael is a worthy and influential woman, although the extent of her power is probably overrated, not only by her but by many of the people who read her. "On the Future of Movies" was a major piece, almost a manifesto, but its impact was glancing at best. It burned a few studio executives, and prompted a rebuttal from Joyce Haber, a gossip columnist for the *Los Angeles Times* and a sort of self-elected industry mouthpiece. Haber's put-down made me anxious about many of the doubts I'd expressed about the Kael piece.

I was in L.A. when the Haber piece appeared. I probably wouldn't have seen it otherwise. I don't mean this to be snide, it's just that Haber's audience is almost entirely industry oriented; she's not published at all in New York. The piece was generally too silly to be of much use outside the industry proper, anyway. They all needed a little comforting after Kael had called them all pirates, so Haber was there with cold compresses. Maybe the best thing about the Kael piece was that it gave some studio execs the snits — anything that keeps those guys on their toes is valuable — and that it prompts reactions like Haber's, which, dizzy as they are, do reflect an entrenched industry attitude. As my friend Steve Farber says, it's one measure of the general intellectual arridity of the Southern California film community that one is forced, not to take Joyce Haber seriously, but to consider her at all.

If the Haber piece hadn't put me on Kael's side, the reference she made to me would have made Kael and me at least allies. Kael had looked to Brian De Palma, another friend of mine, as one of the sources of strong independent filmmaking, and got put down by Haber for picking someone so obsure — obscure enough, Haber wrote, so that the only other critic who knows who Brian De Palma is is Jay Cocks, and that's only because they're close friends. It's amusing to be attacked by Haber (it's happened to me before), and I thought of clipping the column and sending it to Kael, but I figured she'd already gotten the word. Besides, I still couldn't bring myself to support her piece.

Kael's right in what she wants for movies, but a lot of the people she likes aren't going to give it to her. Come to think of it, what *does* she want? More **Mean Streets**, which is fine, and more Irwin Kershner, which isn't. But besides quarreling over her choice of champions to carry her standard, she got a lot of the business details wrong, fudged them, I think, to make her point. When she recommended filmmakers handle distribution of their films all on their own, she said that it couldn't be any more tough and enervating dealing with exhibitors than it is dealing with studio executives. But in almost anyone's experience, the exhibitors are the grimmest. Studio executives themselves regard them with the same horror and disdain (usually well concealed) that filmmakers generally reserve for the executives. If the executives are Visigoths, then the exhibitors are Yahoos. And the quality of films generally is not going to be improved if the filmmakers handle distribution all themselves. George C. Scott's **The Savage Is Loose**, which he produced and directed and starred in and which he is distributing himself, is as sleazy and as stupid (although rather more pretentious) as the crassest studio product.

It is Francis Coppola who has the right idea. He bought into Donald Rugoff's Cinema 5 chain shortly before the Kael piece came out, and what he does with it could and ought to be quite promising. Of course, to make a move like that you need a few million bucks. More later about what Coppola wants to do, and could do, with this new set-up.

Jay Cocks

Jay Cocks, born in the Bronx, reviews movies for Time.

Film as Business

Back to obscenity

In mid-1973, the United States Supreme Court in a series of ominous decisions retreated from the growing liberality of its standards by narrowing the test for obscenity. In brief, the Court established a rule that material that violated the following conditions could be regulated under applicable State law if

"(a) ... 'the average person, applying contemporary community standards' would find that the work, taken as a whole, appeals to the prurient interest ...; (b) ... the work depicts or describes, in a patently offensive way, sexual conduct specifically defined by the applicable state law; and (c) ... the work, taken as a whole, lacks serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value."

Justice Burger, however, limited the new doctrine by announcing that only those materials depicting or describing "patently offensive 'hard core' sexual conduct" could be proscribed.

He cited examples of hard core material as

" (a) patently offensive representations or descriptions of ultimate sexual acts, normal or perverted, actual or simulated;

" (b) patently offensive representations or descriptions of masturbation, excretory functions and lewd exhibition of the genitals."

This was a sharp change from the prior rule that material to be found obscene must be "utterly without redeeming social value." It is obviously far easier for a court or a jury to convict a defendant in an obscenity prosecution where the proof need only show that the work as a whole lacks serious value than where it must be shown that it is without any redeeming social value at all.

The 1973 cases went even further in insisting on the application of local, as opposed to national, standards in defining what is obscene. In earlier decisions the Court, by a plurality, had found that any affront to community standards must be looked at from a national point of view. Now Justice Burger indicated

"It is neither realistic nor constitutionally sound to read the First Amendment as requiring that the people of Maine or Mississippi accept public depiction of conduct found tolerable in Las Vegas or New York City."

This opened a Pandora's box of problems. What is the locale? Is it a state? Or a city? Or a part of a city? Or what? With specific reference to film, did this means that a film could play in one locality — and be banned in another? Must cuts be made to pass community muster in Topeka while the original version runs in Kansas City? Can the film play unedited in Atlanta while banned in its entirety in Tifton, Georgia? The questions multiply.

Within days of the 1973 decision, the Supreme Court of Georgia affirmed a jury conviction under local obscenity law of one Billy Jenkins for exhibiting **Carnal Knowledge** at a theatre in Albany, Georgia. The decision cast a pall over the entire film production-distribution-exhibition (as well as the literary) scene. Here was a distinguished motion picture — lauded by eminent critics — its female lead (Ann Margret) nominated for an Academy Award — clearly a film serious in intent — restrained in the treatment of its sexual theme — condemned by a know-nothing jury and a split Appellate Court.

Fortunately, a year later the Supreme Court has now had the opportunity and has grasped it to reverse the Jenkins conviction. Justice Rehnquist, writing for the majority, finds the film non-obscene under constitutional standards regardless of the jury determination. The issue for him lies in what appeals to "prurient interests" and what is "patently offensive" and, in particular, when a jury has the right to so determine. A jury does not have unbridled discretion in this matter, for the obscene is limited to "hard core sexual conduct" and **Carnal Knowledge** is hardly that.

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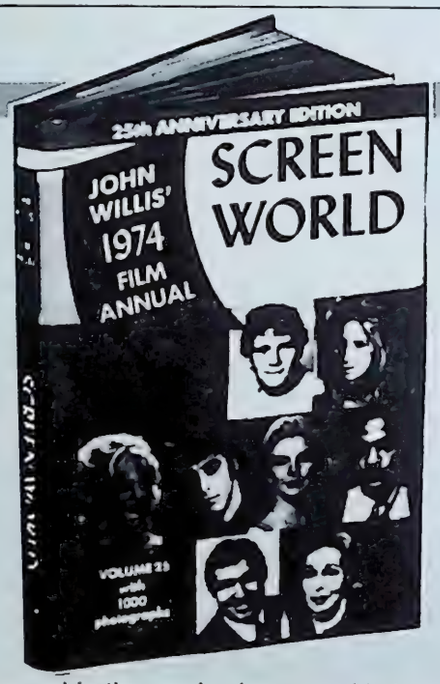

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few rules become evident:

1. He knows the local standard rule will not permit local juries to determine obscenity without reference to the free speech provisions of the First and Fourteenth Amendments.
2. He knows that the film **Carnal Knowledge** and films like it are not obscene.
3. He knows that the mere general portrayal on the screen of sexual intercourse or "ultimate sex acts" without "genitalia" is not obscene.
4. He knows that sexuality per se is not obscene.
5. He knows that nudity per se is not obscene.

Just what *is* obscene remains a matter shrouded in obscurity and doubt. But knowing the negative should help in determining the positive.

The 1973 decision should no longer deter the candid filmmaker who wants to tell a sexual story on the screen. He obviously can do it without fear of substantive legal entanglement if he does it with a degree of care and restraint.

I wish to stress that your author's view is that obscenity for adults (as opposed to children) should be open and permitted. This was also the view of the President's Commission which studied this subject, but whose report was rejected by the departed and unlamented Mr. Nixon. While this approach seems clearly superior to that of state obscenity laws, at least the **Carnal Knowledge** decision puts limits on local autonomy and makes clear that the Court will review cases of abuse. While confusion still reigns, an area of doubt has been cleared.

Other improvements within the current framework may be developing. These include:

1. Establishment by state legislatures or courts of *the State* as the "community" for the application of obscenity standards. This would destroy the fear that an infinite number of localities could run rampant, and would at least confine the problem to fifty or less jurisdictions.

2. Passage of laws requiring that the state act under civil law against a film or book for an injunction before starting penal proceedings against exhibitors or distributors. In such event a decision would be rendered on the merits before a prosecution could be instituted under such a loose charge as obscenity.

3. Pinpoint definition by state law which will clarify, insofar as possible, that which is and which is not obscene.

The Motion Picture Association, with its allies, has mounted a campaign for these objectives. It deserves support from all interested in broadening the media's right to use materials and themes of every character.

Michael F. Mayer
(with research assistance by Shelley B. Mayer)

Michael Mayer is a partner in the New York theatrical law firm of Mayer & Bucher. He teaches a course on Motion Picture Problems at the New School for Social Research, and has authored numerous articles and books on motion pictures, most recently The Film Industries — Practical Business/Legal Problems in Production, Distribution and Exhibition *(Hastings House).*

Coffee, Brandy & Cigars

Did you know that two brilliant directors once wanted to film *Cyrano* — von Sternberg and H. d'Abbadie d'Arrast? No one would back them, but a nothing director, Michael Gordon, found backing and did it with José Ferrer, despite which it still remains to be done.

Back in 1923, the French actor, Pierre Magnier, starred as Cyrano in a silent French film in colors. Coquelin, to whom Rostand dedicated his play because he incarnated the role so ineffably on the stage, would have smiled approvingly at Magnier's playing, but the miracle is that a good silent film was made of a play that relied on its words, some of the most exquisite poetry in modern theatre annals. And though this silent **Cyrano** made a bow to the moon-struck words through an occasional title, Lubitsch went one better by dispensing entirely with the dialogue (and what dialogue!) of Wilde in **Lady Windermere's Fan** and coming up instead with visual equivalents of the Wildean wit and sparkle in his 1925 silent film in which Irene Rich, as Mrs. Erlynne, was so irresistible.

Did you ever see Walt Disney's **Who Killed Cock Robin?** Not only one of the best of the "Silly Symphonies" but a little gothic gem of Gray's "purest ray serene."

Did you know that a paper has been written (by one Charles Watson of the University of Alabama) demonstrating via actual quotations that Frank Norris

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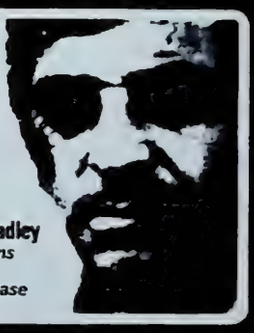

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was inspired by Dante's *Inferno* in writing the ending of **McTeague** which takes place, as you know, in Death Valley?

Having recently celebrated in this column the seeming demise of two what-were-to-me impossible film projects, **The Magic Mountain** and **Remembrance of Things Past**, I find now that I was premature in my obsequies. Visconti says he will do both (though someone in Munich, name of Nils Nilson, claims to have the rights to the Thomas Mann opus and says *he* will do it). Visconti promises to revive the Harold Pinter adaptation of the section Proust called *Sodom and Gomorrah*, which Robert Dorfman and Stephane Nicole (one of the French Rothschilds) were to produce, with Joseph Losey as director, retaining the original principals — Marlon Brando, Alain Delon and Silvana Mangano. What do you want to bet that neither gets done? Back in the Fifties, Alexander Korda planned to do it and even before him, Mann and Stroheim were brought together in the hope that backing could be found. No dice. After I'd given Dr. Mann a light for his cigar at a party in New York, at which he and Stroheim first met for this purpose, he asked me if I thought *The Magic Mountain* could be filmed. "No," I said. Thirty-five years later I still think so. And though no one asked me if I thought any portion of *Remembrance of Things Past* could be filmed, I would also say, "No." The director of **La Règle du Jeu** — Jean Renoir at his peak — might have, but where will you find the cinema equivalent of Proust today, if ever he existed? Visconti is a serious director, no question, but he rejected doing a film on the Folies-Bergère, not because he felt the subject unworthy of him but because he couldn't cast it with the names he would want (or people to play those names) — Chevalier, Mistinguette, Chaplin (yes, Chaplin, said Visconti, "who played the spot in its hey-day). Visconti is a serious director, but, as to Proust, not that serious.

Someone in England is going to remake **The 39 Steps** (which means "remaking" the 1935 Hitchcock version, of course — for me the best film Hitchcock ever made). *Variety* reports that it bore little resemblance "to Buchan's novel, the action of which was set in 1913 and led (fictionally) to the first World War." The director of the remake, James Keneim Clarke, says "his version will place the story in its original war-time period, and will otherwise be more faithful to the author." As if that's the surest way of making a successful film. Sometimes, of course, it is, depending what your source is and who you are, as in the case of Stroheim filming Norris's **McTeague**, but such masterworks as **Morocco, The Blue Angel, The Devil is a Woman, Trouble in Paradise** and Pabst's **The Three Penny Opera** used their sources only as "kick-offs" and went their own sweet way from there, which resulted in their becoming immortal. The director must bring himself, and what he himself *is* determines what his film will be, faithful to his source or not.

Herman G. Weinberg

Herman G. Weinberg has contributed articles to most of the world's leading film journals, served on the juries of various film festivals, been U.S. correspondent for Sight & Sound *as well as* Cahiers du Cinéma, *and published several books on the cinema.*

NEW IMPROVED BOOK SECTION

BOOKS ON FILM: A CHECKLIST

This column lists new books, whether hardcover (H) or paperback (P), dealing in whole or in part with the motion picture and issued, for the most part, in the English language by North American publishers; also new editions of out-of-print titles, and novels the significance of which transcends their fictional format.

Ava: A Life Story. By Charles Higham. Delacorte 1974. 267 pp. $7.95 (H).

The Beggars Are Coming. By Mary Loos. Bantam 1974. 504 pp. $1.75 (P). A well-researched novel about Hollywood.

Milton Berle: An Autobiography. By Milton Berle with Haskel Frankel. Delacorte 1974. 337 pp. $8.95 (H).

Brother Carl. By Susan Sontag. Farrar Straus Giroux 1974. 176 pp. $10.95 (H) $4.95 (P). The screenplay.

Cars of the Stars. By George Barris and Jack Scagnetti. Jonathan David 1974. 254 pp. $16.95 (H). Special cars used in films or owned by stars.

Closely Watched Films. By Antonin J. Liehm. Int'l Arts & Sciences Press (901 N. Broadway, White Plains, N.Y. 10603) 1974. 485 pp. $15.00 (H). Interviews with Czech filmmakers.

A Companion to the Movies. By Roy Pickard. Hippocrene (171 Madison Ave., New York, N.Y. 10016) 1974. 287 pp. $8.95 (H). Major film genres from 1903 to now.

James Dean: A Short Life. By Venable Herndon. Doubleday 1974. 288 pp. $7.95 (H).

Different Strokes. By John Warren Wells. Dell 1974. 256 pp. $1.25 (P). The (alleged) making of a porno-flick.

Elizabeth: The Life and Career of Elizabeth Taylor. By Dick Sheppard. Doubleday 1974. 507 pp. $10.00 (H).

Everybody Loves Somebody Sometime (Especially Himself). By Arthur Marx. Hawthorn 1974, 288 pp. $9.95 (H). The story of Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis.

Fifty Super Stars. John Kobal, ed. Crown 1974. 160 pp. $9.95 (H). Pictorial memorabilia.

Film Canadiana 1973-74. Compiled by Louis Valenzuela, Piers Handling and Maynard Collins. Canadian Film Institute (1762 Carling, Ottawa, Ont. K2A 2H7) 1974. Vol. 1 (Film) — 251 pp.; Vol. 2 (Television) — 160 pp. $9.95 and $5.95 (P). Yearbook of Canadian film and television activities.

Film and Reality. Roy Armes. Penguin 1974. 254 pp. $1.95 (P). Cinema in its historic context.

The Filmgoer's Companion. By Leslie Halliwell. Hill & Wang 1974. 4th ed. 873 pp. $25.00 (H).

Filmmaking for Beginners. By Joan Horvath. Thomas Nelson 1974. 162 pp. $5.95 (H).

Greta Garbo. By Richard Corliss. Pyramid 1974. 157 pp. $1.75 (P).

Judy Garland. By James Juneau. Pyramid 1974. 159 pp. $1.75 (P).

The Great Spy Pictures. By James Robert Parish and Michael R. Pitts. Scarecrow Press 1974. 585 pp. $17.50 (H).

A Heritage of Horror. By David Pirie. Avon 1974. 192 pp. $2.95 (P). The English Gothic Cinema 1946-1970.

Hollywood. By Garson Kanin. Viking 1974. 393 pp. $8.95 (H). Reminiscences.

The Hollywood Professionals: Howard Hawks, Frank Borzage, Edgar G. Ulmer. By John Belton. Barnes 1974. 182 pp. $2.95 (P). Vol. 3 in series.

Hollywood Speaks: An Oral History. By Mike Steen. Putnam 1974. 379 pp. $8.95 (H). Interviews with film craftsmen.

How To Be A Movie Star, or A Terrible Beauty Is Born. By Chris Chase. Harper & Row 1974. 208 pp. $6.95 (H). Humorous comments by an aspiring actress.

Marlon. By Bob Thomas. Random House 1974. 277 pp. $6.95 (H). "Portrait of the Rebel as an Artist."

Masterworks of the French Cinema. John Weightman, ed. Harper & Row 1974. 350 pp. $10.00 (H) $4.95 (P). Includes **The Italian Straw Hat, Grand Illusion, La Ronde, The Wages of Fear.**

Memories for Tomorrow. By Jean-Louis Barrault. Dutton 1974. 336 pp. $10.00 (H). Autobiography of the actor-director.

Mother Goddam. By Whitney Stine. Hawthorn 1974. 374 pp. $12.95 (H). The career of Bette Davis with a running commentary by the actress.

Movie Magic. By John Brosnan. St. Martin's Press 1974. 285 pp. $10.95 (H). The story of special effects.

Revolutionary Soviet Film Posters. By Mildred Constantine and Alan Fern. Johns Hopkins U. Press 1974. 98 pp. $12.95 (H).

The RKO Gals. By James Robert Parish. Arlington 1974. 896 pp. $14.95 (H).

Scenes From A Marriage. By Ingmar Bergman. Pantheon 1974. 199 pp. $6.95 (H). The screenplay of Bergman's tv drama.

Screen World 1974. John Willis, ed. Crown 1974. 256 pp. $9.95 (H). 25th edition of the yearbook.

Six European Directors. By Peter Harcourt. Penguin 1974. 287 pp. $2.50 (P). About Eisenstein, Renoir, Bunuel, Bergman, Fellini and Godard.

The Story Behind The Exorcist. By Peter Travers and Stephanie Reiff. Crown 1974. 246 pp. $6.95 (H).

Supertalk. By Digby Diehl. Doubleday 1974. 293 pp. $8.95 (H). Interviews with Bogdanovich and other (non-film) personalities.

Theories of Film. By Andrew Tudor. Viking 1974. 168 pp. $6.95 (H) $3.25 (P).

Truffaut. By Don Allen. Viking 1974. 176 pp. $6.95 (H) $3.25 (P).

TV Guide to the Movies. By Judith Crist. Popular Library 1974. 415 pp. $1.50 (P). Critical reports on over 1500 films.

Irving Wallace: A Writer's Prolile. By John Leverence. Popular Press (Bowling Green, OH 43403) 1974. 454 pp. $6.95 (H). About the widely-read novelist and scriptwriter.

The War Film. By Ivan Butler. Barnes 1974. 191 pp. $8.95 (H).

The War Film. By Norman Kagan. Pyramid 1974. 160 pp. $1.75 (P).

War/Peace Film Guide. By Lucy Dougall. World Without War Publ. (7245 S. Merrill Ave., Chicago, Ill. 60649) 1974. Rev. Ed. 124 pp. $1.50 (P). Annotated film list.

John Wayne. By Alan G. Barbour. Pyramid 1974. 160 pp. $1.75 (P).

Westerns. By Philip French. Viking 1974. 176 pp. $6.95 (H) $3.25 (P).

Wide-Eyed in Babylon. By Ray Milland. Morrow 1974. 264 pp. $7.95 (H). The actor's autobiography.

A World of Movies. By Richard Lawton. Delacorte 1974. 383 pp. $25.00 ($19.95 till 12/31/74). (H). Seventy years of film history in pictures.

The Writer and the Screen. Wolf Rilla. Morrow 1974. 191 pp. $6.95 (H). On writing for films and tv.

George L. George

George L. George, for many years a film director with an Academy Award for one of his documentaries, is book reviewer for several film magazines, and General Editor of Pitman Film Books, New York.

NEWS

Melville Shavelson, former president of the Writers Guild of America, and — among other things — director of **It Started in Naples** and **Houseboat**, has written a novel (*Lualda*, to be published by Arbor House in February) about a pretty Italian girl, who begins her trade in the streets at the age of 11, and Steve Berman, a Jewish-American who writes and directs motion pictures.

Another movie-man who's written a book is Ron Kurz, who wrote his *Lethal Gas* (published this month by M. Evans) in the projection booth of a Baltimore theatre. Kurz's novel is a comic exposé of the prison system (the author having previously spent six years as a guard in a Maryland penitentiary), and now film rights have been purchased by Martin Elfand (screenplay to be written by John Lardner).

Other screenplay rights recently acquired: Gene Corman (Roger's brother) has picked up Oxford professor Robin Garton's *Clive of India* and is scheduling shooting for Benares, India come spring. ... Jack Wiener (former head of Columbia Pictures in London) has bought Britisher Jack Higgins's *The Eagle Has Landed* (to be published next June), which is about a plot by Hitler and Himmler to assassinate Winston Churchill. ... Producer Mike Frankovich has spent $350,000 acquiring film rights to Glendon Swarthout's forthcoming novel (*The Shootist*, to be published by Doubleday) about a man who, discovering he has incurable cancer, decides to take as many bad guys as possible with him when he goes. ... January is the scheduled starting-date for the film version of Irving Wallace's *The Fan Club* (Columbia to distribute, Lawrence Gordon to produce, and John Hough — of **Dirty Mary Crazy Larry** — to direct). ... Shooting has begun on the film version of Ethel Lina White's dramatic thriller, *The Spiral Staircase*; Jacqueline Bisset and Christopher Plummer are starring, Peter Collinson is directing, and Warner Bros. will release. ... James Ellsworth has purchased the film rights to Clifford Dowdey's prize-winning biography, *Robert E. Lee*, and filming — with a $10 million budget — is scheduled for mid-March. ... And, finally, a production package has been put together to film Joseph Hayes's novel, *The Long Dark Night*. The book had been turned down by various picture companies when agent Peter Thomas decided to have a crack at it. First director Michael Anderson — who had just completed **Doc Savage** — showed some interest in it. Then producers Fred Weintraub and Paul Heller (whose **Enter the Dragon**, made for $800,000, is on its way to a world-wide gross of $25,000,000). And, with names like that behind it, Warner Bros. has decided to give it a go.

The current pictorial autobiography of Alexander Solzhenitsyn includes a 1971 letter from the author to his attorney in which he mentions cancelling an order for pens and then goes on, "For the time being, I've been able to obtain a few Bics ... so there's no urgency there." You don't get a testimonial like that every day, so Bic Pen Corp. has now shipped Solzhenitsyn a lifetime supply of their ballpoints.

Claiming that his two books (*Man and the Dolphin* and *The Mind of the Dolphin*) were largely copied for the film **Day of the Dolphin** (and the book of the same name), writer John C. Lilly has filed suit against (amongst others) Buck Henry, Joseph E. Levine and Avco Embassy Pictures. He's asking for an injunction against further showings of the film, plus all revenues from its release.

The Educational Film Library Association (17 West 60 Street, New York, N.Y. 10023) has just published a comprehensive filmography (by Judith Trojan) on the subject of aging. About 150 shorts and 38 features are discussed (names and addresses of all distributors are included). Single copies are $2 a piece, and there are quantity discounts for larger orders.

Anita Loos's *Kiss Hollywood Good-By* (Viking) has now gone back to press for its fourth time, making that some 39,000 hardback copies in print.

REVIEWS

Little Girl Lost (The Life and Hard Times of Judy Garland), by Al DiOrio, Jr. Arlington House. 298 pp. $8.95 (In Canada: Dent)

I Remember It Well, by Vincente Minnelli, with Hector Arce. Doubleday. 391 pp. $10.95 (In Canada: $12.75)

William Wyler: The Authorized Biography, by Axel Madsen. Crowell. 456 pp. $9.95 (In Canada: Fitzhenry & Whiteside; $11.45. In UK: W.H. Allen; £3.75)

An Appalling Talent: Ken Russell, by John Baxter. Michael Joseph. 240 pp.£4.00 (In Canada: Thomas Nelson; $14.50)

Hollywood, England: The British Film Industry in the Sixties, by Alexander Walker. Michael Joseph. 493 pp.£5.50 (In Canada: Thomas Nelson; $14.95)

First there was Brad Steiger's astrologically-oriented abomination, then a shoddy *Films of...*, Mel Torme's ego-soothing tome, and then something by her last husband. And now ***Little Girl Lost***. God save Garland from her fans!This really is the worst scissors and paste sob-sister sludge one has ever had to slog through — totally sabotaged by proof-reading that consistently mis-aligns footnotes (aren't we scholarly) and reeking of a sensibility that can actually gush about the lost "treasures she could have made out of... 'Before the Parade Passes By'" et al, had she been allowed to record them. Judy knew better than that, buddy.

Certainly if you're looking for much information on Garland's films, don't look here — even the filmography would appear to have been lifted from Gene Ringgold's *Film Careers*. And why the publishers, who after all have produced some quite worthwhile volumes in their short career in filmbook publishing, feel they must soup up the jacket with several false claims ("Why didn't Judy sing a real song in **Life Begins for Andy Hardy?**" — don't look here for an answer), I really don't know.

However, there are two good things one can note: a thorough discography (with few errors) and a listing of Garland's television work.

It's more than a joy, then, to turn to Vincente Minnelli's autobiography, not only for the enormously honest (and for myself) quite moving sections dealing with his life with Garland, but because in the area of authorized and un-authorized, badly researched, biographical and autobiographical books that yearly flood the market, this quite simply stands out as the very best in some time. Granted it probably helps that Minnelli is my favourite director (and shame to Doubleday for not having seen that a decent filmography was appended), but ignoring that and the fact that this is a collaboration, what is unique is how the wonderful style and enormous flair of the man comes across, as in his films, on the printed page.

I'm glad to finally see in print Minnelli's only 1930's film credit (for staging a number in 1937's **Artists and Models** — sadly lacking in the MCA prints — at least in Canada), and of course there's a wealth of detail on the making of all his films. One would welcome more information on **Ziegfeld Follies** for one (Minnelli doesn't tell us about all those out-of-control bubbles), but there are some hilarious stories regarding Mitchum and Hepburn during the filming of **Undercurrent**. Incidentally I think it's Brahms *3rd*, and not his *4th* that was used for the score here.

And quite rightly there's a lot about Liza. The warmth of feeling, élan and love that has gone into his films suffuses this book as well.

Lack of warmth, of any feeling of the man himself, is what, unfortunately makes ***William Wyler***, billed as the authorized biography, somewhat dull reading. Not that it isn't well written and scrupulously researched, but there seems to have been no contact between author and subject, for whatever reason, and whatever the demerits of certain interview books, I think some present-day comments by Wyler would have helped. Useful, though, as a fine reference work on a somewhat problematic director.

Speaking of problematic directors, finally two years after the last event it covers (the opening of **Savage Messiah**) we have ***An Appalling Talent*** (with an appropriately appallingly tasteless jacket: Russell crucified). One understands that legal complications and Russell's endless tampering with the text caused the delay in publication.

Baxter has done an excellent job of interweaving the quite revealing interview material with his own critical comments and observations of Russell at work (though I don't always like this overuse of flowing present tense, where it's not always appropriate) providing not only a fascinating book in itself, but some real insight into this perturbing director.

Where applicable in the tv filmography however, casts should have been listed, especially as many consider such works as *Song of Summer* the real touchstone of this erratic director's genius. And, to really quibble: It's Old Mother Riley (not Reilly); Laban (not Laben); Lena Horne is not in **Thank Your Lucky Stars**, and Baxter errs on cuts in the American version of **The Boy Friend**.

Baxter describes Alexander Walker as "a literate and loquacious Ulsterman whose instinct for publicity is as well-developed as Russell's", going on to recount two of their tense public encounters. Walker's comments on Russell in ***Hollywood, England*** strike me as fairly sane, though needless to say, he's hardly a Russell booster. (Baxter notes he once threatened to come after Russell with an elephant gun if he ever made **Mahler** — I wonder what happened?)

Walker is really to be commended for the fantastic organizational work he's done in ordering the fascinating saga of the financially-American-dominated British film industry in the sixties. As film critic for the *Evening Standard* throughout most of the period, he's had almost a privileged insider's view, the result being a very astute, probing insight into the film producers, stars and directors and their films.

I think he overreaches himself somewhat in assessing the sociological significance, but when he's detailing the production background of films like **Tom Jones, Blowup, Performance,** the Bond epics, the Beatles' films *et al* he's unbeatable.

Michael Joseph are to be congratulated for the publication of these two excellent books.

Glen Hunter

Nonfiction Film: A Critical History, by Richard Barsam. E.P. Dutton. 332 pp., illustrations, index. $4.95 paperback, $9.95 hardcover. (In Canada: Clarke, Irwin; $5.75; $11.40)

The People's Films: A Political History of U.S. Government Motion Pictures, by Richard Dyer MacCann. Hastings House. 238 pp., illustrations, index. $6.75 paperback, $11.50 hardcover. (In Canada: Saunders; $8.50; $13.75)

Studies in Documentary, by Alan Lovell and Jim Hillier. Secker and Warburg. 176 pp., illustrations. £1.15 paperback,£2.40 hardcover. (In Canada: Collins; $4.50; $8.75. In US: Viking; $2.75; $6.95)

Until two or three years ago, the publication each year of substantial books dealing specifically with the documentary film was minimal. Within the last few years, however, three or four worthwhile works per year have been appearing, ranging from books of interviews with filmmakers to biographies and autobiographies, anthologies, histories, and critical studies. Of the three new books covered in this review, Alan Lovell and Jim Hillier's ***Studies in Documentary*** perhaps is the most interesting. ***Studies*** consists of three essays, and of filmographies, biographical notes, and a bibliography. Of the three essays, "Humphrey Jennings" by Hillier and "Free Cinema" by Lovell best help to fill gaps in the critical materials available on the British documentary. The essay on Jennings is notable both for its background on the intellectual life of Jennings and for its discussions of specific films, while the essay on "Free Cinema" meaningfully assesses the NFT Free Cinema Programs within the context of the critical and theoretical writings of the period. (It is useful to compare this Jennings essay with those in the *Film Quarterly* 1961-62 issue devoted to him, especially Lindsay Anderson's article which has been reprinted in Lewis Jacobs' *The Documentary Tradition*.) The remaining piece, Alan Lovell's essay on John Grierson, does not add a great deal to the available literature on Grierson; it is tantalyzing but disappointing since it hints at, but does not pursue a political-philosophical analysis of Grierson and the government sponsorship of films. ***Studies in Documentary*** does not attempt a comprehensive treatment; it does, I believe, what it set out to do by provoking serious thought about three

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important aspects of the British documentary.

The People's Films: A Political History of U.S. Government Motion Pictures by Richard Dyer MacCann also deals with the sponsorship of films (or lack of it) by government. MacCann's book, a rewriting and updating of his 1951 PhD dissertation at Harvard, is scholarly, well documented, and informative. It balances between an updated political science dissertation — which relates in great detail the peregrinations of Congress, Presidents, and film administrators in their decisions on the government's funding of films — and a critical examination which analyzes the role of government in the sponsorship of films. At times parts of the book bog down into minutiae, anecdotes, and academese. Of interest are those sections of the book dealing with the production and reception of the films of Pare Lorentz and of the War Department during World War II and those sections which abstract from the particular the political and philosophical assumptions inherent in the existence of a government sponsored film production program. Although MacCann tries to put the American experience into context by relating the development of sponsored films in England and Canada, he does so superficially and with a certain amount of political and social naiveté. In fact, this political naiveté carries over to other parts of the book: his discussions of the U.S.I.A. and of television and the Presidency, for example.

For those interested in an overview of nonfiction film in Great Britain and the United States, or in a textbook for a college course in nonfiction film, Richard Meran Barsam's ***Nonfiction Film: A Critical History*** is most valuable. Barsam spends a chapter broadly laying the groundwork for a loose definition of "nonfiction" film and distinguishing the term from the narrower, but more commonly used term, "documentary". His argument is useful in helping students to realize that film categories and labels are most helpful when we understand history, beginning with a discussion of early European films which influenced American and British nonfiction films. From "Nanook to Woodstock" as Lewis Jacobs' recent documentary book puts it, it's all here. Barsam relates his history succinctly and clearly, albeit at times superficially — even though he does pause with some detail over Grierson and his group, and with Flaherty. Barsam describes and criticizes major works, directors, and movements within the framework of the social context of the films and their concepts, stressing always content more than technique. Although as film history he has given us more syntheses than analysis, he has contributed towards a needed on-going critical evaluation of the nonfiction film. Thankful as we are for the increasing availability of books on the documentary, lacunae still exist, including in-depth theoretical analyses of the relationship between social and aesthetic aspects of the documentary, documentary film's association with journalism, and the affinities between fiction and nonfiction film.

John Stuart Katz

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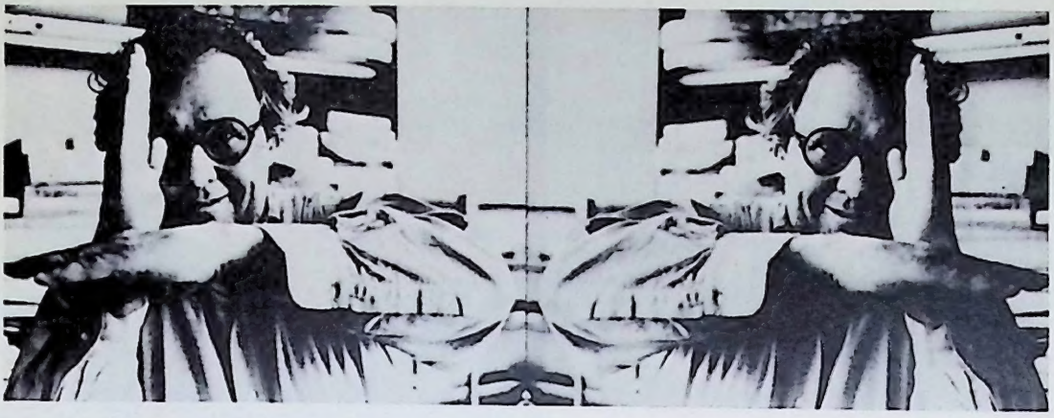

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